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PLEA FOR PEACE  
ON  
PSALMODY.**

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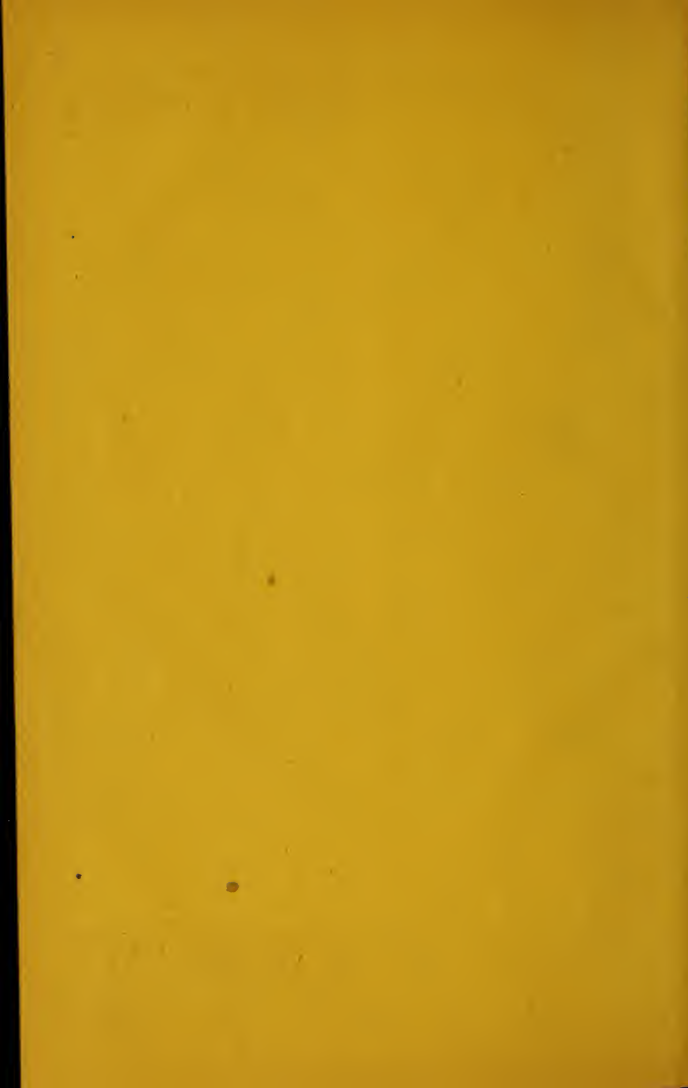
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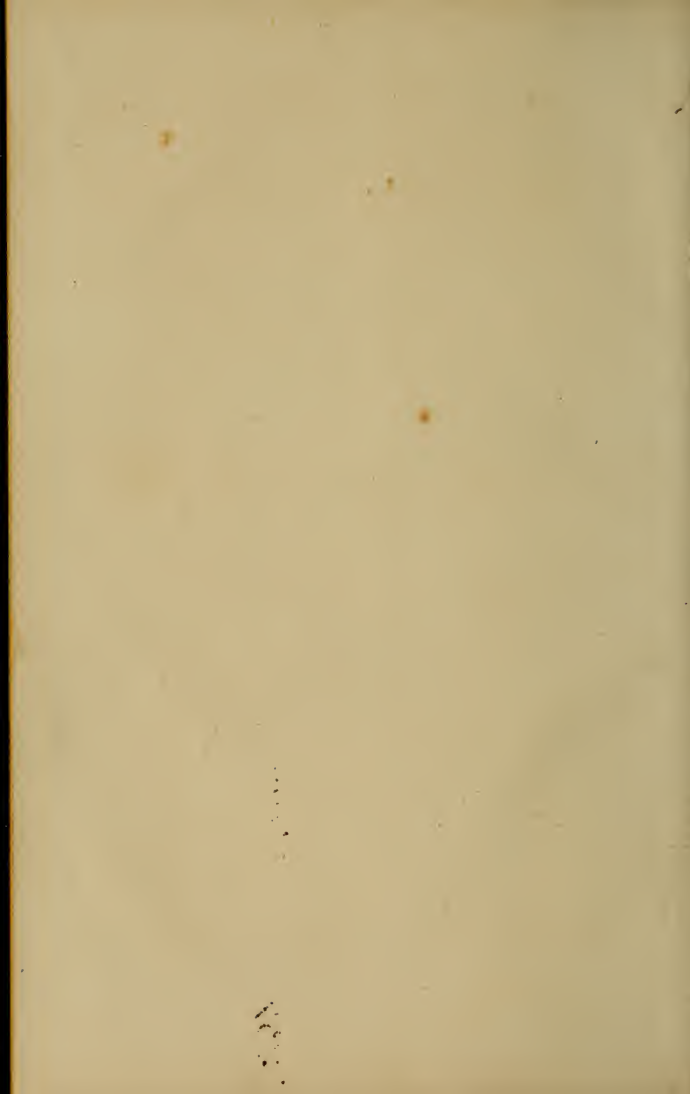
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A

# PLEA FOR PEACE

IN THE

## PRESBYTERIAN FAMILY.

ON THE SUBJECT OF

# PSALMODY.

BY REV. J. F. M'LAREN, D. D.

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Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.—Phil. iv, 5.

*"Controversias, non multiplicare, sed quantum fieri potest, minuere, viri Christiani officium est."*—Alph. Turretin.

What can be more irrational, than a disposition to defend a proposition, only because we have had the rashness to adopt it.—*Saurin*.

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## TO THE READER.

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WESTERN THEOL. SEMINARY, }  
July 15, 1852. }

I have had the pleasure of reading, in manuscript, the following treatise of Dr. M'LAREN on Psalmody. The clearness, candor, and comprehensive brevity, of this little work, must make it popular with unprejudiced men. The great point in the controversy is firmly seized, and distinctly presented; so as to relieve the reader of many irrelevant issues, which confused or designing men have mixed up with the subject: and this is done, with a calm dignity and fairness, which I do not see how any reader can fail to respect. Brief as it is, it quotes historical facts not generally known, nor hitherto adduced, in the discussion; and which, if I mistake not, must prove embarrassing to the advocates of "exclusive use &c.;" and go far to satisfy reflecting men that their tenet is a novelty. The admirable temper with which these pages are written, deserves to be noticed, and cited as an illustration of what christian polemics may be, and should be, even on the most exciting occasion.

ALEX. T. M'GILL.

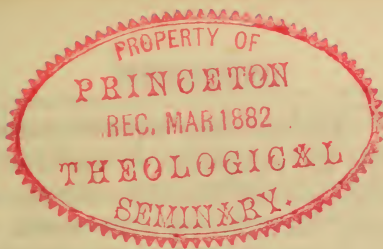
As far as I can judge of the work above referred to by Dr. M'Gill, from having heard portions of it read in manuscript, I heartily concur in the recommendation which he has given it.

D. ELLIOTT.

TO THE

CHRISTIAN PEOPLE, LOVERS OF PEACE IN THE  
PRESBYTERIAN AND ASSOCIATE REFORMED CHURCHES,  
THIS WORK IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED, BY

THE AUTHOR.



## INTRODUCTION.

To prevent the reader from laying aside this little book, as soon as he discovers the subject, some apology, or at least, some explanation is deemed proper. The subject is connected with the peculiarities of some branches of the church, and hence has assumed, in their esteem, a very prominent and important position. Of course, it has had controversy waged in its behalf; gallant champions, in burnished armor, have crowded around it, every one anxious to wield his sword or to sling his stone. In religious controversies, it not seldom happens, that some persons get possessed with the polemic contagion, who are distinguished more by the violence of their action and the loudness of their battle-cry, than by the skill of their tactics or the brilliancy of their exploits. Thus has it been with the subject of Psal-

mody. And the writer begs the reader not to allow his recollection of spiritless and wearisome columns in newspapers, to prevent his giving this little work a fair perusal. Its author is one of those who believe that a religious discussion may be conducted without uncharitableness of spirit or unmannerly rudeness of style. His book will not be found to contain much of mere partyism, as he does not wear either the red or the white rose of faction in his cap. He has no one's book or periodical before him, to inflame his temper or to sharpen his wit. He is not even solicitous to show his own opinion, so much as to give a just prominence to argument and to point out the direction and result to which it leads the candid enquirer.

These statements, it is hoped, will afford a sufficient guaranty to the reader, that he will not be wearied by reiterations, nor pained by personalities. And that no great amount of time will be required for the perusal of this essay, its own slender proportions give the best assurance. The object has not been to make a book; but, as far as



justice to the subject and the design of this undertaking would allow, to avoid making one. Hence, what needed to be said has been compressed within the smallest intelligible compass, and superfluous and irrelevant matter has been resolutely declined.

It is the honest and earnest wish of the writer, to contribute his poor counsels towards terminating the strifes on this subject, which have too long disturbed the peace of God's family, impairing the love of His children, and interrupting their communion with each other. Such evils ought not to be entailed upon the church of Christ without a clear and unavoidable necessity. And the writer knows that there are many persons in the contending churches, who deeply lament these alienations among christian brethren, which the intemperate zeal of party leaders has occasioned. He is well aware that the ground of candor and conciliation, in religious debates, is not the easiest ground to hold, nor the most popular position; yet he can truly say, without claiming more courage or confessing to the charge of less discretion than other men, that he takes

this ground by deliberate choice. There seems to have been a long enough continuance of this "strife of words" to make the office of a conciliator neither absurd nor impertinent. There seems a state of things to have arrived, when some one, not intimidated by the common fate of mediators, may kindly approach the combatants, warring with each other, instead of jointly striving for the faith of the gospel, and say to them, "Ye are brethren, why do ye wrong one to another?" To do this is the effort of the writer, in the following essay.

Some five or six years ago, he determined to ascertain, if it were possible, the precise scripture doctrine on the subject of Psalmody. With a humble desire to know the truth, and a determination to embrace it when found, he searched for it at the fountains, in the word of God. And, now, in view of the doctrine of the Holy Scripture, he believes that the difference of sentiment and practice, between the Presbyterian and the Associate Reformed churches, is not sufficient to justify their separation from each other; that the existing difference may

be accounted for on the ground of the influence of early education, prolonged habit and party feeling, without supposing much impulse of scripture argument on either side; he believes that brethren have been alienated more by the fierceness of their fights than by the doctrines which occasioned them, and he humbly desires to blunt the edge of of party feeling, and to lead christian brethren to exercise mutual forbearance and to enjoy fellowship with each other.

It may be proper to state that the following sheets were written more than three years ago, when the author was a minister in the Associate Reformed Church. Finding that much more restricted views on the subject of Psalmody prevailed in this part, than he had been accustomed to in other parts of the Associate Reformed Church, he felt a natural desire to conform to the views of his respected associates. He had every inducement to do this, that could be drawn from his occupying a prominent post in the church, from his standing in the estimation of his brethren, and from those suggestions of ambition of which few persons are wholly

devoid. He thought that there must be some evidences or arguments for the exclusive use of the old Psalms, which had escaped his observation, but he could not leap to that conclusion without looking for those evidences; and he determined, if possible, to find the foundation of his brethren's belief, that he might build upon it too. For this purpose he searched the Scriptures for the doctrine of the exclusive use of David's Psalms, but he found it not. He often talked with his brethren on the subject, during the progress of these investigations, and was sometimes half disposed to be envious of their easy composure of mind, when he found them, with much less pains and study, strong in the belief that all Hymns and Paraphrases were an abomination. But, serious in his desire to know the truth, and finding less evidence than he had anticipated, in favor of the prevailing sentiments; popularity and intellectual indolence and a forced quiescence of faith, were deemed of less value to him than a scriptural belief and a clear conscience. This is not said as

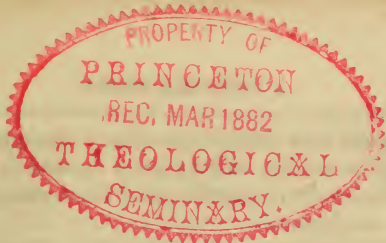
a sarcasm upon others, but as a simple truth in application to himself.

The process and results of this investigation were committed to writing, with the intention of publishing them for the benefit of the cause of Christ, which has suffered much, though it is hoped not irreparably, by angry debates on the subject; and it was particularly hoped that a candid treatise, coming from from one of themselves, might exert a pacific and profitable influence on persons of both parties, who have not examined the subject, except at second hand, and not in the light of Scripture. For the same reason, a few items are also added from Church History, and particularly from the history of the A. R. Church.

Having been prepared while the author was in the A. R. Church, the same style of expression has been retained that was then used, as the reader will notice as he goes along.







## CHAPTER I.

### STATEMENT OF THE QUESTION.

The question in dispute between the Associate Reformed Church and the General Assembly Presbyterians, is this—Are we bound, in singing the praises of God, to restrict ourselves to the use of the Psalms of David? When I say that the A. R. Church takes the affirmative of this question, I mean that this is the position of so many of my brethren, that it may be called the sentiment of the Church, although there is no such doctrine taught in our church standards. The Presbyterians take the negative of this question.

Much controversy has been waged on this subject, and it has led to much alienation of feeling, and prevented that happy communion which ought to exist between these two orthodox bodies. My desire is to mediate between them, and to draw them together, at least, in affection, in unity of spirit and bonds of peace, by the not too elastic ligaments of mutual forbearance. It will facilitate this design, and subserve the interests

of truth and candor, to define the question more minutely, and to raise around it some landmarks, to keep the mind from wandering and confusion.

The brethren who take the affirmative, practically define their position by the following out-points: 1. That it is wrong to sing, in the worship of God, a poetical composition which, although strictly orthodox, is not a fair translation of any part of the Scriptures. 2. That it is wrong to sing a composition which gives the sense of any of the Psalms in the form of paraphrase and not of strict translation. 3. That a strict poetical translation of any other portion of the Holy Scriptures, besides the Psalms, must be excluded from use, just the same as the forementioned kinds of compositions, viz. Hymns and Paraphrases. 4. That to use either of these kinds of songs of praise, whether in public, family or private worship, is a grievous corruption, offensive to God.

Those who take the negative of the question in dispute, particularly our Presbyterian brethren, illustrate their standing ground by the statements, that it is right to sing in divine worship, 1. Fair metrical versions of the Psalms of David. 2. Paraphrases of the Bible Psalms, which exhibit the sense thereof, although it be not in the form of strict



translation. 3. Metrical translations and paraphrases of other parts of the Holy Scriptures beside the Psalms. 4. Hymns or poetical compositions which are sound and scriptural in their matter; and, 5. They claim that, in doing so, they are only worshipping God "in spirit and in truth," exercising the right to judge of hymns and paraphrases by the standard of scripture, as they do of all human productions.

This, it will be admitted by both parties, is a fair statement of their respective views, and brings the main question clearly before the reader's mind: Are we bound to sing, in the worship of God, a strict version or translation of the one hundred and fifty Psalms, to the exclusion of everything else?

Before entering on an examination of the arguments adduced on this subject, I beg the reader's attention to the following thoughts. It ought, surely, to soften the asperity of party feeling, that the brethren on both sides honor the word of the Lord in their Psalmody: the one class taking their songs of praise from a large and precious portion of the Scriptures; the others taking theirs from any and every portion of them. Both make the Scriptures the standard and criterion of their Psalmody: the one claims to have a scripture, and the other a scriptural Psalmody. Their points of agreement on

the subject of praise, are more numerous and important than their points of difference. Is it, then, irrational to indulge, or impertinent to express the hope, that by the blessing of God, some of my brethren may be induced to feel, speak and act with more forbearance towards those who differ from them? Why should the church of Christ be divided on a question that comes fairly under the head of "doubtful disputations."—Rom. xiv, 1. Why should the friends of Christ be distressed by this war of words and passions? Why should the enemies of Christ have occasion of triumph? They have never had it in their conflicts with us: O, let them not have it, as spectators of our unnecessary and ungracious combats with each other.

## CHAPTER II.

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MAIN ARGUMENT FOR THE EXCLUSIVE USE  
OF DAVID'S PSALMS, STATED.

I now proceed to exhibit respectfully my views of the subject, which, if correct, will justify the claim for such a degree of mutual forbearance as will restore and perpetuate peace and christian fellowship between the contending parties.

In a controversy of such long standing and in which so many persons have assumed the attitude of championship, we naturally expect, when we take a historical survey, to find a considerable number and variety of arguments on both sides; nor will it surprise a candid and intelligent reviewer to find some that are sophistical, some that are weak, some that are irrelevant. In my reading on this subject, I have met with arguments which it is not worth while to characterize, as I have no intention of introducing them and do not wish to speak disrespectfully of absentees.

But there is one argument which occupies a commanding position, and is admitted on

all hands to have an important bearing on the question. It is called the argument from the divine appointment, or "*divine warrant.*" I will state it as briefly and plainly as I can, as follows:

In the Bible we have a large number of psalms, composed under the inspiration of God, by different persons and at different times: these have been sung in the worship of God by his appointment: they have, by his direction, been collected into a book, and after their collection have been sung in divine worship. But there is no other collection, in the New Testament or elsewhere, that has like evidence of divine appointment; and no promise is given of the aid of the Holy Spirit, in making other psalms. Therefore we have the divine warrant for using the Book of the Psalms in God's praise, and the use of any other is unauthorized and consequently unacceptable and offensive to Him.

This is a fair and full statement of it. And as it is, by general claim and admission, the strongest argument in favor of the exclusive use of David's Psalms, I desire the reader's special and patient attention to it, first, in its application to a particular version of the Psalms; and secondly, to its application to the Psalms in any version of them. If it is a sound argument, it is sufficient to estab-

lish and maintain the doctrine of my brethren, and all others are superfluous; if it is unsound, all others are inadequate, and the cause of the A. R. Church, so far as Psalmody is concerned, is greatly weakened, if not hopelessly prostrated. I propose, therefore, to dismiss all others from the arena, and to "fight neither with small nor great, but only with the king" of arguments; or rather, as a herald, not a combatant myself, I will examine the quality of this champion knight.

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### CHAPTER III.

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#### MAIN ARGUMENT EXAMINED.

First, let us examine the above main argument in its application to a particular version of the Psalms of David. We might admit the obligation to use the Bible Psalms alone, in the worship of God, and yet consistently refuse to be confined to a particular version of them. If, desiring to use the Bible Psalms, a worshipper should ask where are they to be found, it will not do to put Rouse's version, for example, into his hands as the only songs of praise that he

can properly sing. This is only one version among many. It does not, therefore, hold exclusive claim to use, and the above main argument says nothing about this or that version. The distinction which I am now noticing is a most important one, and if candidly adhered to, in this controversy, would narrow the grounds of dispute very considerably. But, unfortunately, it is not adhered to. The ground is taken by the A. R. brethren, in favor of the Bible Psalms; for the defence of this ground, ramparts are raised and this argument, from "*divine warrant*," is placed, like a Paixhan gun, on a commanding point, and a banner is hung out with the alluring motto, "An inspired Psalmody," and we are loudly assured that the contest is not about a particular version. But when we look within the circumvallations, we discover that it is a particular version that our brethren are contending for. This is evident, from the single fact that, while they admit the existence of excellent versions of Psalms and parts of Psalms, besides their own, they condemn the use of them as much as they do the use of Hymns of human composition. Besides, even our own Psalm-book itself shows that the exclusive claim for a particular version is not founded in justice or candor, for this book contains two versions of several of the



Psalms, and it might have contained five as well as two. So that a person might hold the doctrine of a Scripture Psalmody and conform his practice strictly to it, without ever using the version in that book at all.

But we are told that this version is the best one. The title page of some editions bears the commendatory testimony, that this versification is "more plain, smooth, and agreeable to the text than any heretofore." This was doubtless true, two hundred years ago, when it was made; but the continuance of this declaration on the title page of modern editions, reminds me of a sign that I once saw—"New Store:" the sign was nearly illegible, through age, and the store had been discontinued long ago. The style of language has greatly changed since this Psalm-book was made. Much of the English metre of that period almost requires re-translation, to make it the metre of the present day. High commendation is given to this version, by saying that it is "as near to the original as the laws of versification will admit." Without expressing any opinion on the the extent to which the laws of versification were tested by the worthy Baronet and his venerable coadjutors in making this Psalm-book, I may remark, that the above statement seems hardly consistent with the repeated efforts of the church to

*See also 1050*

get a better version. Again, altho' absolute perfection is not claimed for this version, yet the highest epithets are applied to it; "Inspired Psalter," "God's Psalm-book," &c.; nothing else is ever sung in divine worship; and the utmost alarm prevails when individuals or church judicatories make any movement towards altering and amending it.

Now, notwithstanding these high and varied laudations of our Psalter, it is not anywhere in the vicinity of perfection, as a close translation; it is paraphrastic in innumerable cases; it is often impenetrably obscure; it does not always give the right sense, and in one instance, at least, gives a direct contradiction to the sacred word. But if the version is liable to these exceptions, it is palpably unjust to restrict us to the use of it alone; and, since the main argument which we are considering, says nothing about this version, the restriction is as illogical as it is unjust. To meet the difficulty that arises from the inapplicability of the argument to the case, our brethren have tried, by hard labor and loud acclamations, to make the case fit the argument. This is done by thrusting our Psalm-book into the place of the Bible Psalms, calling it the "inspired Psalter," "God-given Psalm-book," "the Psalms of inspiration," "the Bible Psalms," &c.



I now invite the reader to accompany me on a short tour of inspection into our ancient and excellent version. And I desire him to go, with the same spirit of candor with which I have myself gone into this examination. Having set about the investigation of this subject, with a solemn conviction of its importance to the interests of religion in this part of the country, I resolutely, yet modestly I trust, determined to turn over every stone, in search for the truth. And being well aware that some cherished sentiments have kept a place in man's belief, by no other tenure than that of long possession, and that there are many arguments which, like coin, pass current, on the sole recommendation of being well worn, I determined to examine the claim of our version of Psalms to the character of a strict translation. And I must honestly confess, that I was surprised at the amount of paraphrase and of gratuitous deviation from the text that I met with. Not to speak of the words added in the way of epithets and of synonymous words multiplied to complete the lines, and of half lines added to make out the verses and supply the rhyme, some idea of the claim of our version to the character of being "as near to the original as the laws of versification will admit," may be formed from the following additions, no-

ticed in a couple of hours comparison of it with the prose translation. Besides scores of words in the former, which have nothing corresponding to them in the latter, there are many whole lines and some entire couplets inserted either for explanation or merely to fill out the verses. Here are a few of those found in Psalms taken at random from the book. The added words are those in italics.

He made *a* pit and digged it *deep*,  
*Another there to take.*—Ps. vii, 15.  
 Upon a ten stringed instrument,  
*Make ye sweet melody.*—xxxii, 2.  
 O, for thy truth's sake cut them off,  
*And sweep them clean away*—liv, 5.  
*The Lord my God my helper is,*  
*Lo, therefore I am bold.*—liv, 4.  
 We *surely* shall be satisfied  
*With thy abundant grace.*—lxv, 4.  
 They set their mouth against the heavens,  
*In their blasphemous talk.*—lxxiii, 9.  
 Thou dost me hold by my right hand,  
*And still upholdest me*—lxxiii, 23.  
 My flesh and heart doth faint and fail,  
*But God doth fail me never.*—lxxiii, 26.  
*Still think the same upon.*—lxxiv, 2.  
 Their ensigns they set up for signs  
*Of triumph thee before.*—lxxiv, 4.  
 A man was great and he was had  
*In estimation.*—lxxiv, 5.  
 O from thy bosom pluck it out  
*For our deliverance sake.*—lxxiv, 11

Thou clav'st the fountain and the flood

*Which did with streams abound,*

Thou dry'dst the mighty waters up

*Unto the very ground.*—lxxix, 15.

How lovely is thy dwelling place,

*O Lord of Hosts, to me.*

*The tabernacles of thy grace*

*How pleasant, Lord, they be,*—lxxxiv, 1.

And on the harp of solemn sound,

*And grave sweet melody.*—xcii, 2

The one hundredth Psalm, long metre is exceedingly paraphrastic, from beginning to end. A candid comparison will show that it is not as near the prose as Watt's 100th Psalm, first part.

Of all his *gracious* benefits

*He hath bestowed on thee.*—ciii, 2.

The Lord *almighty* and his strength

*With steadfast hearts seek ye.*

His *blessed* and his *gracious* face

*Seek ye continually.*—cv, 4.

*That I will keep thy statutes all*

*Firmly resolved have I;*

*O do not, then, most gracious God,*

*Forsake me utterly.*—cxix, 8.

Indeed, this Psalm furnishes so many examples of the very free paraphrase, that I will not occupy room in reciting their connexion. The following will be found interpolated in this Psalm.

*In all my doubts and fears.*—v. 24.

*And did my life well try.*—v. 59.

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As those that slothful are.—v. 60.

Through worldly ease and wealth.—v. 70.

I'm black and parched with grief.—v. 83.

My life they scarce did leave —v. 87.

But close to them did cleave.—id.

I will not multiply these illustrations: they have been collected with little effort, and I leave out a considerable number that I had collected, lest the reader should be wearied with them. It will be noticed that, in some of the instances, there is not merely amplification of the thought or sentiment, but new thought is inserted. So that, in singing our Psalms, we actually sing much that is not in the Psalms of David; that is, we sing "human composures." Why, then, should we be hard upon others who do the same thing? Thou that sayest, a man should not sing paraphrases, dost thou sing paraphrases? "Let us not, therefore, judge one another any more."—Rom. xiv, 13.

I only add, that the expressions in Ps. xiv and Ps. liii, which are the same in the original and in the prose translation, are varied in the poetic version. The same is true of Ps. xliii, 11, and xliii, 5. This fact shows that the makers of the metrical version not only did not deem it necessary to confine themselves to a strict translation, but even studied to give a somewhat free and varied paraphrase. And it certainly shows, that

they did not entertain the notion which we, in these last days and in these ends of the earth, are assured is the only correct one.

Although I speak of this version as not a literal translation, yet I do not maintain that a literal translation is the best one. It is not the best for conveying the naked meaning of an author, and it is probable that a too servile effort to conform it to the prose translation has introduced into our version much of the obscurity and harshness which we find in it. And it may be noticed that those portions of the Psalms which are freely translated, as in the instances just cited, are more easy and lucid than other portions where the translation is more rigidly verbal. For the statement, that a strictly verbal translation is not the best one, we have the authority of Cowper, who was an equally eminent translator of poetry and original poet. "There are minutiae," says he, in every language which, transferred into another, will spoil the version. Such extreme fidelity is, in fact, unfaithful; such close resemblance takes away all likeness. The original is elegant, easy, natural; the copy is clumsy, constrained, unnatural. To what is this owing? To the adoption of terms not congenial to your purpose, and of a context such as no man writing an original work would make use of.

Homer is everything that a poet should be; a translation of Homer, so made, will be everything that a translation of Homer should not be, because it will be written in no language under heaven; it will be English and it will be Greek, and, therefore, it will be neither." Again; "Homer is everywhere remarkable either for ease, dignity or energy of expression; for grandeur of conception, and majestic flow of numbers; if we copy him so closely as to make every one of these excellent properties absolutely unattainable, which will certainly be the effect of too close a copy, instead of translating, we murder him." [Haley's Life of Cowper. Vol. II, p. 102.]

Dr. Campbell, in his learned and ingenious strictures on some versions of the Scriptures, observes that a translator's work requires strict attention to three principal things; first, that an author's sense and meaning is fairly represented, second, that as far as practicable and consistent with the language into which the translation is made, the author's spirit and manner be conveyed into the version; and third, that the translation have so much the air of an original work as to appear natural and easy. "A slavish attachment to the letter, in translating, without any regard to the meaning, is originally the offspring of superstition, not



of the church, but of the synagogue, where it would have been more suitable in christian interpreters, the minister not of the letter but of the spirit, to have allowed it to remain." And of this method, as to its significancy, he says, "Instead of the sense of the original, it sometimes gives downright nonsense; frequently a meaning quite different; and not seldom makes the author say in another language, the reverse of what he said in his own." Again; "I shall only add, that versions of this kind are very improperly called translations. The French have a convenient word, *travesty*, by which they denote the metamorphosis of a serious work into mere burlesque, by dressing it in such language as makes it ridiculous, makes the noblest thoughts appear contemptible, the richest images beggarly, and the most judicious observations absurd." Much more to the same purpose may be seen in Dis. X, parts 1 and 2. A celebrated poet says—"Pindar's high Lyrics, if translated literally, would become perfectly stupid." [Alfieri.]

It would, I admit, be highly unjust to apply these observations rigidly to our version of the Psalms. But that they exhibit the true theory of translation, as far as they go, no sound scholar will deny. And it will be denied by few, that the strictures which they

include do apply, to some extent, to our version of the Psalms. The sense of the divine original is often obscured by an inverted and unnatural collocation of the words, not suitable to the genius of English poetry; and more frequently by crowding out qualifying and connecting words, for the sake of contracting the expression into a certain measure, and of making the verses of the version in metre correspond numerically with those of the original.

I have now shown, I trust clearly, that the main argument, from "divine warrant," does not restrict us to the use of a particular version, say that of Rouse. But inasmuch as my brethren, while they admit this in statement, do yet practically set up a claim for that version to exclusive use, basing their claim on its alleged superiority, I have further shown, that, even as a version, it is far from being correct. I do not disparage it. But from what has been said, it is evidently not so superior to all others, as to entitle it to the reverence due to an inspired work, or to preclude the use of every other version, in praising God. We ought, therefore, to be more diffident of our own, and more gentle towards the Presbyterian Psalmody.

With our version of Psalms we have become familiar by long usage, and we are at-



tached to it by early and sweet religious associations. It is to most of our people their mother tongue in the utterance of praise. But to others, who have not had this long practice, it is, to some extent, still in an unknown tongue—an ancient if not a foreign language. And we ought not to be surprised at the embarrassment which even ministers of other denominations feel in reading our Psalms, for they are in a language which they have not learned in their childhood, and been familiar with, as we have, by their daily use of it in worshipping. The English metre of the seventeenth century is not the same language as the English metre of the nineteenth.

It is, however, but just to add, that expressions of aversion and contempt for these old Psalms are neither becoming nor right. This style of speaking disparagingly of each others Psalmody, renders the prospect of reconciliation less encouraging, and makes the exercise of mutual forbearance more difficult, although it is, for that very reason, the more desirable. It is not comely or christian-like, in either party, to ridicule the Psalmody of the other, as long as, in the matter of it, it is conformable to the word of God. This practice has led some of the Associate Reformed people to believe that the Presbyterians undervalued the in-

spired book of Psalms. And this impression has been deepened and extended by some writers, I hope not intentionally, in their taking great pains to prove the inspiration of the Book of Psalms, and to show the high estimation in which it has been held by eminent christians, from Luther down; and all this is solemnly addressed to Presbyterians, for their conviction, as though they did not already believe these things as firmly as we do ourselves.

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## CHAPTER IV.

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### MAIN ARGUMENT FURTHER EXAMINED

Let us now approach a little more closely the position that is defended by the main argument. Having shown that the argument from "divine warrant" does not require us to restrict ourselves, in singing the praises of God, to the Scottish version, let us now try whether it is sound and competent to prove an obligation to use exclusively the Bible Psalms, in any one version or translation, however perfect it may be.

I admit that the argument is plausible; I doubt not that it is honestly intended by those who use it, to honor God's word; I

own that, for years, it was satisfactory to my own mind; and that it is the best the case admits of. But it appears to thousands of intelligent persons in the church of Christ, to be insufficient to prove an obligation to use *exclusively* the Psalms of the Bible in praising God. The parties who differ about this argument, agree in faith, in order, in their estimate of the privilege and duty of praising God, and of doing it in a right manner. The difference, while they agree in so many points, is too small to justify divisions of the church and hostility of feeling. Neither contemns the authority of God's word, neither undervalues the exercise of praise; but they differ about the force of an argument. The Presbyterian admits all the *facts* included in the main argument, for the exclusive use of the one hundred and fifty Psalms; he admits that they were given by inspiration, nay, he contends for that as much as any one does; he admits that they were given to be sung by the people of God; that they were collected into a book by themselves for the use of the church. And he might even admit, that they were designed to be sung, to the end of the world, and yet consistently use Hymns and Paraphrases, just as he does, in connexion with them: for his opponent has done nothing towards proving that the Psalms *alone* are to be sung.

This is his conclusion, I know; but between his premises, admitted by the friend of Hymns, and this conclusion, there is a very wide chasm, that it requires great logical athleticness to leap over.

The greatest stress is laid on the fact of the collection of the Psalms into one book, to prove the design of God that they alone should be sung. There they are in the Bible by themselves; put there by the divine direction; therefore, he intended that they and they alone should be sung in his worship, to the end of the world.

But let the reader remember that they were sung for five hundred years before they were collected into a separate book, if this was done by Ezra; and it will appear, that during all that period, in which the Psalms were used in the worship of God, with a splendor and effect greater than at any subsequent time, the main proof of the divine appointment would have been utterly devoid of force. In the days of David, and of Solomon, and in the period, even, when king "Hezekiah commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the Lord, with the words of David and of Aseph the seer, (2 Chron. xxix, 30,) and for three hundred years afterwards, the Psalms were not collected into a book, in their present form, and therefore this part of our brethren's argument would,

during all that time, be utterly invalid. It would seem more judicious, to rest their claims to use on their inspiration; but then, that would admit the use of other inspired songs, as well; and the whole argument would be upset by its own weight.

All that the collection of the Psalms into one book proves is, that they were to be preserved as a part of the sacred Scriptures; it proves nothing about their being intended to be sung. And it is worthy of notice, that although the Psalms and the Book of Psalms and David, are again and again mentioned in the New Testament, yet they are referred to in the same way as any other portion of the Old Testament Scriptures, and *not associated with singing at all*. David is spoken of as a Prophet, his Psalms are quoted as proofs and illustrations of doctrine, they are classified with the Scriptures, but are not mentioned in connexion with singing in a single instance, in the New Testament. See Matt. xiii, 35; xxvii, 35; Luke, xx, 42; xxiv, 44; Acts, xiii, 33, 35, &c. &c.

It might appear frivolous, and yet not be more so than the reasoning which it meets, to say, that if a supposed design of the Psalms is to be so narrowly defined and so rigidly adhered to; they ought by no means to be read, because they were given to be sung. But there is another reply which



meets the allegation, on broader and more important grounds. The reading of the Scriptures is inculcated as often and explicitly, as the singing of Psalms is. Now, if the collection of one hundred and fifty Psalms into one book is sufficient evidence that God designed to restrict all our singing of praise to these, then the collection into one book of all the inspired writings, from Genesis to Revelation, is equal evidence that he designed all our religious reading to be confined to this one book, and the reading of any other is a corruption of the ordinance of Scripture reading, just as we are told, the singing of Hymns is a corruption of the ordinance of praise. Solomon's Proverbs were collected into a book, therefore we must never make any use of those terse apothegms which embody the wisdom of other sages; we must never read church history, lest we disparage the records of Moses and the Evangelists; nor may we utter a sorrowing sentiment for the church's declensions or disasters, unless we do it in the words of Jeremiah's Lamentations, which have been collected into a book by themselves.

This mode of arguing inferentially, from a *supposed* design of the Head of the church, gives a little too much room for the play of fancy. And that my brethren avail them-

selves of the space, in some measure, I think has already been made to appear. And I only add further, that this strict adherence to design, does not appear to be consistently carried out by my brethren, in relation to other sacred books, for the only book in all the Bible that stands under the title of a "Song," they would no more think of singing, than they would of singing the book of Numbers.

## CHAPTER V.

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### SECOND PART OF THE MAIN ARGUMENT EXAMINED.

I now come to consider that part of the main argument which says that *the Psalms of David were sung in divine worship by the church of God*. This is not denied. But that they were sung in the New Testament church, to the exclusion of all others, is the thing to be proved. If I were disposed to embarrass those who maintain that they were, I would ask them to show that they were sung *at all* in the apostolic age. They were *used*, they were properly used, like the other "Scriptures," as proofs of doctrine; but it cannot be shown, or at least it never has been, that they were *sung*



in the worship of God. Whether singing constituted any part of the service observed in the synagogue is not certain; but it is plain, from several considerations, that instrumental music could not have been introduced into the synagogue. [See Jennings' *Jewish Antiquities*, p. 193, 4.] And it is but a fair inference, that those psalms which demand the use of such music were not sung in the synagogue worship. They were sung in the Temple, where a large number of persons were officially employed in this service, with the accompaniment of all the various instruments mentioned in the Psalms. But, as the christian church was formed after the model of the synagogue and not of the Temple, we should look to the former and not to the latter for our example, in singing the praise of God. Dr. Mason well observes, on another subject, "inferences should be cautiously drawn from institutions under the law to duties under the gospel. Error, here, has been one of the most fruitful sources of corruption; and an inlet to all the rabble of the anti-christian hierarchy."

But there was singing, beyond a doubt, in the primitive church. Singing and Psalms and Hymns are not unfrequently mentioned in the New Testament. What was sung? What Psalms did they use? Our brethren reply, in a way which suits their purpose

much better than it does the claims of scripture evidence or of logical reasoning, they sang the Psalms of David. How do you know that, brethren? Why, say they, the case is clear, for they had the Psalms of David and they had no others, there being no Psalms or collection of Psalms in the New Testament. Now, if a Presbyterian should say, that the primitive christians sung Psalms and Hymns that were not inspired, and that *because* they were not inspired, they are not in the New Testament, I do not see but that this assumption would be just as good, and this inference just as logical as the other.

But let us look at the matter, without making either assumption, and see how truth and reason present the case; it is of no use for reasoners to meet each other with naked assertions and denials, they did, and they did not. Open the New Testament. We find passages in which singing and praising are mentioned as the acts of religious men, worshipping God. In some of these instances, the words which they used are not given. Affirming or denying that they used the Psalms of David, on these occasions, may be carried to any extent; but it proves nothing for either side. They balance each other, and the summing up of both is *zero*—nothing. But there are other instances, in

which the words used in praising *are given* by the New Testament writers. These afford better materials for argument. Well, when we read these, we find, that in point of fact, *they are not the words of David's Psalms*. How will our brethren dispose of this fact? They must admit, that in the church of Christ, in apostolic times, the Psalms of David were not *exclusively* used in praising God, or, in other words, that the doctrine which they now hold, viz. that it is wrong to sing anything but the Psalms of David, was not the doctrine of the church in apostolic days. Whence, then, has their doctrine arisen? Of men; and of men of very recent times, as I shall shortly make it appear.

But, to revert to these cases: Of those in which the words are not given, take that of Paul and Silas, in the prison.—Acts xvi, 25. To suppose that they sung in the precise words of a Psalm of David, is to suppose that they were more particular in their midnight singing, than they or others were in their professed quotations from the Old Testament Scriptures. Yet, perhaps they did; no one can tell.

In the case of singing a Hymn, after the institution of the Lord's Supper, it may have been a Psalm of David, or it may not. There is no way of determining that ques-

tion. The confident assertion, made by some, that it was what is called the Hallel, or certain Psalms used by the Jews at the Passover, rests only on conjecture, without even traditionary authority. Our divine Lord, in instituting the ordinance of the Supper, which was to succeed that of the Passover, accompanied it with several new, significant actions and circumstances, and with explanatory words: and he might also have added a new Hymn at its conclusion. Poole very plausibly conjectures that the discourse and Hymn used on this occasion are the words recorded by John in the 14th to the 17th chapters of his gospel. [See Synopsis Criticorum, on Matt. xxvi, 30.]—The conjecture is certainly as good as that the Hymn used was the 113th to the 118th Psalm. Nay, it is much better, for the connexion of events, the order of narrative, in John, and the strain of the thoughts are such as decidedly to favor the hypothesis. It is rendered, too, quite probable, by the admitted fact, that the apostle John records principally such details of Christ's acts and sayings, as were omitted by the other gospel historians. It seems to me, to present that interesting scene in a beautiful light. Behold the blessed Jesus, during the observance of this first sacramental supper, comforting his disciples, who were sorrowful

and depressed by his declaration that he was going away from them: "Let not your hearts be troubled," he says, "I go to prepare a place for you;" "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you;" "these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you, but now I go to him that sent me;" and then, having so fully and affectionately discoursed with his disciples, he turns and addresses to his father in heaven the sublime and appropriate Hymn contained in the 17th chapter: having spoken these words to them, he "lifted his eyes to heaven and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy son."

This wonderful strain of discourse began at the table; (John, 13th chap.) and when it was ended, "he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron where was a garden"—Gethsemane.—xviii, 1. The subject, the style and the position of the discourse seem to change the conjecture of Poole, almost into a sweet and undoubting conviction.

Let us now proceed to the other New Testament songs of praise, in which the words used *are recorded*. The songs of Mary, of Zacharias, and of Elizabeth, in Luke, 1st chapter, are of this class. But the words of their praises are found to be, *not the words of any Old Testament Psalm*.



Well then, here we have in the New Testament, songs of praise; a "collection,, of them, indeed; three in one chapter.

Another case is recorded in Acts, iv, 24-30. Peter and John being released from their persecuting foes, returned to their friends, and recounted to them all that had befallen them. And the company "lifted up their voice to God, with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven and earth," &c. But these are not words of David or of Asaph the seer. These worshippers introduce part of an Old Testament Psalm, but do not confine themselves to it. This is truly an excellent model of a Hymn; the Scriptures are honored and intelligently applied to express sentiments of adoration, gratitude and entreaty, and a prophetic Psalm is rightly appropriated to Jesus by name.

A third case, and perhaps the most unequivocal of all, is the ascription of praise to Christ, on his public entry into Jerusalem. It is recorded in Matt. xxi, 9-15, and in parallel passages in the other gospels. It is partly in the language of an Old Testament Psalm, and partly not. The language of the children is not at all in the words of any Psalm. But it is praise; and the Savior approves it, and cites a Psalm (Ps. viii, 2,) to justify it; "Out of the mouths of

babes and sucklings, thou hast perfected *praise*."

It is necessary to notice some allegations, that have been made in relation to these cases for the purpose of evading the argument, which they offer in favor of using other songs of praise, besides the one hundred and fifty Psalms. This I shall do in the next chapter.

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## CHAPTER VI.

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### SOME OBJECTIONS NOTICED, AND MAIN ARGUMENT FINISHED.

1. It is said, that the New Testament songs referred to, are inspired compositions, and so, do not afford any justification of the use of uninspired Hymns. Well, admitting this, does not the fact of their being inspired justify us in using *them*? If so, then the claim of exclusive right for the one hundred and fifty Psalms, must be given up.

But it is not certain that the company, whose Hymn is recorded in Acts, iv, 24-30, were inspired when they uttered it. Indeed, the contrary is pretty certain; for



it is said, *after* they had finished their Hymn, "And when they had pray<sup>d</sup>, the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost," &c. v. 31. If they were inspired, why may we not sing their Hymn, which appears to be very suitable for celebrating the majesty of Christ? If they were not inspired, then we have an uninspired Hymn recorded, without disapprobation, by an inspired writer. Which horn of the dilemma will be chosen? Both are equally against the opinion, that it is wrong to sing anything but the one hundred and fifty Psalms.

With reference to the children, in the other case, there is not the least reason to believe that they were inspired. And yet our Savior approves and accepts their praises, which the Chief Priests angrily censured. When an objector, in his zeal for an inspired Psalmody, repudiates inspired songs of praise, I cannot but think there is something inconsistent and wrong in his position. It is hard to discover what would satisfy those who reject inspired and uninspired praises alike. And I would seriously ask my dear brethren this question: Should the children in one of your Sabbath Schools rise up in your presence, and with their sweet voices sing this short Hymn to Christ,

"Hosanna to the Son of David;"

would your views of Psalmody allow you, like the blessed Savior, to approve of the deed, or would you, like the Scribes, be "sore displeased."—v. 15.

2. It is further alleged, by some of the more extravagant advocates of the restrictive system, that these are not praises. The songs of Zacharias, and of Elizabeth, and of Mary, not praises? They certainly have very much the appearance of them. Zacharias said, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel," &c.; and Mary said, "My soul doth magnify the Lord," &c.; the people and the children cried, "Hosanna to the son of David, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." If these are not praises, it is hard to find anything that is. Besides, our Savior, in justifying the children, intimates the character of their ascriptions very clearly, "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, thou hast perfected *praise*," and Luke says of Zacharias, "He spake and praised God;" and in his narration of Christ's entry into Jerusalem, "The whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God." Now, when a person asserts that these are not praises, he seems to me, to evince great confidence in the easy faith of those whom he addresses, or small knowledge of the subject of which he speaks.

3. It is further said, that these passages

*were not sung*, or expressed in musical tones of voice. It would be quite as serious an objection to the argument derived from them, to say that they were not sung in a particular metre. I do not know how our brethren found out that they were not sung. If I am not mistaken, it was customary to utter such poetic strains in a tone of voice different from the ordinary conversational or declamatory tones. And it is natural to do it. Besides, the same objection would exclude from use the 18th Psalm, for "David *spake* unto the Lord the words of this song, and he *said*," &c. How many more would be excluded by this formidable objection, I have not ascertained, and it is too frivolous a matter to pursue.

It is supposed that they could not have been sung, since they were extemporaneous effusions. I cannot perceive why extemporaneous effusions might not be sung as well as spoken, and why the disciples could not as well sing "with one accord," as speak "with one accord;" and, indeed, this manner would seem to be more agreeable to the exercise of singing than of speaking.

It may be well enough, however, to remark, for the benefit of the ordinary reader, that if we apply our ideas of modern hymns and modern singing, to the ancient, we shall commit a great error. Those Hymns were

not divided into measured lines and verses as ours are; nor was their singing like ours. It was customary, under the influence of strong excitement of feeling, to utter sentiments in a kind of lofty prose, and to do it in a singing tone, or something like what is called *recitative*, the tones of which are between singing and talking. This was done extemporaneously, and however numbers were able to unite in it, "with one accord," there was no more difficulty in doing it in a singing tone, than in the ordinary tone of speech.

It appears, then, notwithstanding these objections, that in the New Testament we have songs of praise, both inspired and uninspired, some including portions of Psalms and others not, and we have no disapprobation of them, or of their use, by Christ or his Apostles; but, on the contrary, their express approval. Yet, because they were not put "into a book" by themselves, and labeled, A New Psalm Book, it is wrong to use them, or any of those precious praises that are scattered through nearly all the Books of the Bible.

I now proceed to the last part of the great argument for the exclusive use of David's Psalms, viz. that "we have no promise of the aid of the spirit in *making Psalms*." This is a mere play upon words,

not comporting with the sanctity of the subject, nor with the dignity of the argument upon it. We have the promise of the Spirit to aid us in worshipping God, and we need it as much in praising as in praying. In both we are authorized to use the revelation of the Spirit, all of which is profitable for purposes of religious edification. There is a difference, not noticed by our brethren in using this part of their argument, between the aid of the Spirit by plenary inspiration, and his ordinary enlightening and sanctifying influences. *Inspiration* is not claimed for Hymns composed by men, yet the aid of the Spirit may be enjoyed in making and in singing them. And, on the other hand, the inspired Psalms may be sung without any aid of the Spirit. The brethren surely cannot mean to say, that in singing an inspired Psalm, the worshipper does not *himself* need any aid of the Spirit, to render his praises acceptable. Many a thoughtless and ungodly person has sung that sweet Psalm, beginning

“The Lord’s my shepherd, I’ll not want,”

but surely he had no more promise of the Spirit or experience thereof, in so doing, than the devout christian in singing,

“Jesus, my shepherd, husband, friend,  
My prophet, priest and king;



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My Lord, my life, my way, my end,  
Accept the praise I bring."

I have now completed the review of the main argument for the exclusive use of David's Psalms in praising God. Whether I have proved that it does not show a "divine warrant" for restriction to a particular version, or to the Psalms in any version, however perfect, must be decided by the reader. It is no affectation or assurance, however, to say that I have, at least, shown that there is occasion and room for some doubt, about the exclusive claim for the Psalms. And this is the very case for the exercise of forbearance. Brethren who are no farther asunder than the Presbyterians and us, should not break fellowship for such a difference; and we may be committing a great sin against Christ, by shutting out the Presbyterian people from our communion, when we have only such a weak and tattered argument for our own views.

Hitherto I have spoken negatively, defensively, showing that the "main argument" is not sufficient to sustain the practice of the Associate Reformed Church. I shall now undertake, with the same conciliatory design, to prove *from the Scriptures*, that we have divine warrant for the use of *other songs of praise*, besides those contained in the Book of Psalms. This has, indeed,

been done to some extent already, but I have another line of observation to pursue, in drawing forth the scripture doctrine. The Greek scholar will excuse the *unbookish* manner of this part of our work. I suppose it would not be difficult to spread some of the signs of learning over these pages, by the help of a small printer's font of Hebrew and Greek type; but as I write for plain christian people, the machinery may as well be kept out of view.

Before proceeding, however, a remark or two may be made, touching the demand for a "Scripture warrant," as authority for singing Hymns and Paraphrases of Scripture, and translations, in metre, of other portions of the word of God besides the Psalms. This demand can hardly be made on Presbyterians, with consistency, by those who, in very important matters, might be confounded by a similar demand on themselves. As I have before intimated, if the demand for "divine warrant" for singing, not to say exclusively, the Psalms of David in the New Testament church, were urged upon the Associate Reformed, with half the pertinacity they use in pressing a similar demand on Presbyterians, it would be extremely hard to meet it. For it has been shown, in this essay, that in every single case in which the Book of Psalms is certain-



ly referred to, in the New Testament, either by name or by quotation, there is no connexion with singing at all: and again, that in every case in the New Testament, where we have the language of song actually given, it is not the language of David's Psalms.

What express "divine warrant" is there for the sanctification of the first day of the week? We have warrant sufficient, "divine warrant," too, but not more express than we have, as will be shown, for using other Psalms and Hymns. Suppose we should reason about the Sabbath day as we do about the Psalms: There was a Sabbath day already, divinely appointed; it had been kept from the beginning; it was solemnly enjoined in the Fourth Commandment; it is expressly referred to "by name," in the New Testament; and it was observed by our Savior and his Apostles; but we have no command, in the New Testament, to keep another day; therefore, the religious observance of the first day of the week, as the Sabbath, is a corruption of the divine ordinance. The reasoning is just as strong, or rather, just as weak, in this case as in that of singing and praise; and both are answered in the same way. This answer, in the case of Psalm and Hymn singing, will occupy the next chapter.

Again; What express divine warrant is there for infant baptism? We have excellent arguments, and scriptural ones; but have we any more express "divine warrant" than we have for singing uninspired hymns? It is only my determination to be brief, to suggest thought rather than exhaust it, that prevents me from pressing this inquiry, in extended illustration. Instead of this, I will refer the reader to a singular logical fact. One of my Associate Reformed brethren has written a work on Psalmody, which is deemed to be a strong one. He has also written a work of about the same size, on Baptism, a part of which is of course devoted to the doctrine of the baptism of infants. Now, what is singular about these two books is, that the author's principles and modes of reasoning in the one are quite antagonistic to those of the other. This is specially noticeable in relation to the demand for "divine warrant." On Psalmody, an express divine warrant is the basis of the main argument for the exclusive use of the Psalms, and the want of it is deemed fatal to the opposite views; but on baptism, the author says, "It is altogether unreasonable to demand positive and express proof from the New Testament, to show that children of believers \* \* \* have a right

to baptism." Similar contrarieties occur throughout the treatises. If I were desirous to refute either one of these books, I do not think a more effective method could be chosen, than to take the *mode of reasoning* which is pursued by the same author in the other. Although the advocate of the exclusive use of David's Psalms cannot *consistently* demand a "divine wrrrant" for using other Psalms and Hymns, and spiritual songs, yet I have no desire to evade it.

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## CHAPTER VII.

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### POSITIVE ARGUMENT, FROM SCRIPTURE, FOR THE USE OF OTHER SONGS OF PRAISE.

What is the teaching of the New Testament, in relation to the Psalms of David and their use? This is the grand question. If we ascertain what this is, it matters little what one writer or another may teach on the subject. Well, it is certain that the words, Psalms, Hymns, singing, praise, are not unfrequently met with in the New Testament. And they were, doubtless, well understood by those who used them. The same is true of the words prophet, law,

scriptures, prophecy, &c. These are all *general* terms; they were so then; and their *specific* sense and application must be determined by the circumstances in which they are used in particular cases. Hence, the bare use of the word *Psalm* does not necessarily designate a Psalm of David, any more than the bare use of the word *prophet* designates a particular prophet, as Isaiah, Ezekiel, or Daniel. When there is reference to any particular thing or person, of a kind or class, the reference is certified by some attendant circumstance. This manifestly correct principle of interpretation is always observed by the New Testament writers. Let us now apply it to the use of the word Psalm.

In the original of the New Testament this word is used but seven times. In the English translation, it occurs a few times more, verbs and participles being so translated as to include it. I give the texts, with a few hints on them, for explanation.

Luke xx, 42.—“And David himself saith, in the Book of Psalms, the Lord said unto my Lord,” &c. Here the name of the writer, the title of his book, and the quotation from it, conspire to fix, beyond dispute, the application of the word.

Luke xxiv, 44.—“All things which are written in the Law of Moses, and in the

Prophets, and in the Psalms," &c. Here the conjunction of the Psalms with the Law of Moses and the Prophets, assures us that the Psalms of the Old Testament are intended, and especially, as all the authorities referred to are included in what "is written in the Scriptures."—v. 45.

Acts i, 20.—"It is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation," &c. The mention of the book and the quotation, identify the reference. The same is true of Acts xiii, 33. "It is written in the second Psalm, Thou art my son," &c. See also verse 35.

1 Cor. xiv, 26.—"Every one hath a Psalm," &c. Here the general term is used, without anything by which its reference can be determined to any particular one.

Eph. v, 19, and Col. iii, 16.—"Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs." The same remark applies to these as to the passage alluded to just above. As there is nothing to indicate a reference to the Old Testament Psalms in either of them, the words being simply used in their general form and signification, they are properly applicable to any compositions that agree with the definition of the words themselves. These are all the passages in which the word Psalm occurs in the original of the New Testament.

There are a few passages more, in which it occurs in the English, where the verbs or participles are so translated as to include it. As Matt. xxvi, 30, and Mark, xiv, 26.—“When they had sung a hymn;” literally, having hymned. Acts, xvi, 25. “Paul and Silas sang praises unto God;” literally, but less clearly, hymned to God. James v, 13. “Let him sing psalms;” literally, let him sing; as in 1 Cor. xiv, 15, and Rom. xv, 9; where the same word (ψαλλω) is translated, simply, “I will sing.”

In none of these is there anything whatever to designate the Old Testament Psalms. Even the word Psalm is not used in all of them; and where it is used, there is nothing except its general meaning to indicate such reference. But its general meaning is not, according to the principles of interpretation, sufficient; for this applies to any composition answering the definition of the word. To apply it, in these cases, to the Old Testament Psalms is, therefore, a mere assumption, and constitutes what reasoners call begging the question in dispute. But we will not leave this matter yet, lest we should appear to beg the question too.

The word *prophet* is a general one, and, like the word Psalm, is often used in the New Testament, for the purpose of citing Old Testament writings. And it is also



used in its general signification. But there is always a clear distinction observable between its general and its specific applications. Luke iv, 24.—“A prophet is not without honor,” &c. Matt. x, 4.—“He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet,” &c. Here the term is used in a general sense, simply to designate an office, or any person bearing it, and is not applied to any particular one. Again; “In those days there came prophets from Jerusalem to Antioch.”—Acts xi, 27. “There were in the church that was in Antioch, certain prophets and teachers.”—Acts xiii, 1. “Judas and Silas being prophets also themselves.”—Acts xv, 32. “God hath set in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets,” &c.—1 Cor. xii, 28. Now, in all these, and many more instances, the general term, descriptive of the office, is so qualified by the circumstances of its use, as clearly to restrict its application to contemporaneous persons, and to preclude its application to the Old Testament prophets. Paul calls even a heathen poet a prophet, simply because he was so considered by them, and because the word, in their language, meant both a soothsayer and a poet.—Tit. i, 12.

On the other hand, when the Old Testament prophets are referred to, that application is clearly indicated by various means:



their names are mentioned, or quotations are made from their writings. And in this way the Psalms themselves are quoted, just as any other prophecies are: "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, they parted my garments," &c.—Matt. xxvii, 35; Ps. xxii, 18. See also Matt. xiii, 35; Ps. lxxviii, 2.

Another, and most common method of referring to the Old Testament writers, is to prefix the definite article to the word, and then instead of a general, it must have a specific application. The doctrine of the Greek article is briefly this; that when a class of things bear the same general name, no one in particular can be indicated unless the article is prefixed, or some equivalent method of specifying be employed. It is the same as it is in English: if I say, "a Grecian poet," it might be any one; but if I say, "the Grecian poet," I indicate a particular one. Applied to this subject, we learn from this rule and usage, that the general words, prophet, psalm, song, hymn, mean any prophet, psalm, song or hymn, for the words describe them respectively. But when the definite article is prefixed, some particular prophet, psalm, &c. is intended. What particular one is meant, must be ascertained by the circumstances in which the words are used. We have already

shown that, with reference to *the* Prophets and *the* Psalms, this is done by mentioning authors' names, by quotations, and other ways. The following examples will confirm these statements and afford very striking illustrations of the principles we have adduced. John the Baptist was a prophet, was owned by Christ as an eminent one. Yet when the Jews asked him, art thou *the* prophet? he unhesitatingly declines the appellation. He was a prophet, but not *the* prophet. The use of the article makes this difference, and he well knew that its use indicated a specific reference to the Messiah. Again, among the many opinions concerning Christ, some thought him "a prophet," others as "one of *the* prophets." The woman at Jacob's well readily discovered, by his conversation, that Jesus was a prophet, or religious teacher; but the Jewish people, better instructed in the Scriptures, when they heard his sayings, said, "Of a truth, this is *the* prophet," meaning the Messiah. John iv, 19; vii, 40. So also when the word prophets is used in the plural, with the article, it indicates, unless restrained by attendant circumstances, the Old Testament prophets.

I trust these remarks and examples make the force of the article sufficiently manifest. In reasoning this point with brethren, I have

seen them shrink from the argument behind a declaration of this sort, that the article was not of sufficient consequence, and its use was not well enough understood to be made the foundation of any argument on this subject. I am willing that persons should confess want of knowledge, for themselves, but some doubt may spring up about the propriety of their including the sacred writers, or any others in their confessions. Should we discard the doctrine of the article, it would convert Nathan's rebuke of David, "Thou art the man," into something lying between commendation and nonsense. "Thou art a man." And those who profess to be theologians, especially, should be cautious about trifling with the Greek article. It is a small word, composed of a single letter; but they should know, that on this small jewelled point turns some of the strongest scripture argumentation for the divinity of our Savior.

I now respectfully solicit the readers attention to the application of these principles of interpretation, and this doctrine of the article to some of the passages of scripture already cited. 1 Cor. xiv, 26.—"When ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue," &c. These were gifts of the spirit to the Corinthian christians, and the Apostle only

blames the disorderly manner in which they were exercised. It appears that they prayed and sang in an unknown tongue ; that is, in a language not understood by those who heard them. This was a perversion of their miraculous spiritual powers. They might, it is true, exercise them in this way to their own edification, but it would be without benefit to others, for they knew not the meaning. ver. 14, 16. To remedy this evil in the manner of exercising their spiritual gifts, the apostle proposes his own example for their imitation: he would have them pray and sing in a known language, or employ an interpreter, the same as in preaching. ver. 27. "I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also; I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also." ver. 15. That is, my praying and singing shall not be merely in the exhibition of my spiritual gifts, but shall be intelligible, with meaning, that others may understand and profit.

From the *omission of the article* before the word psalm, from the connexion of that word with the extraordinary spiritual gifts, and from the train of reasoning throughout the chapter, it is evident, that the psalms offered in the Corinthian church were such as the spirit enabled the christians there to ~~make~~, and not psalms of the old testament.

The close pallel here observed by the apostle, between praying and singing, shows them to be religious exercises occupying the same rank, and substantially of the same character. And this fact upsets those artificial and hair-splitting distinctions between prayer and praise, which some writers on psalmody have made, for their own mere convenience, without any authority from the Bible, and with very little from the dictionary. I mean those distinctions which represent praise as a more awfully solemn, fixed and uniform exercise than prayer, as involving more need of the aid of the spirit, as requiring to be more accurate in its statement. Such wire-drawing is not found either in our catechism, or in the Scriptures, where prayer, thanksgiving and praise are terms used to express the same acts of worship, many of the Psalms being called prayers, and all of them, whether expressive of gratitude, adoration or supplication, being called praises.

The two passages, Eph. v, 19 and Col. iii, 16, deserve particular consideration. They have always a place in discussions of this subject. I have no interest to give them a wrong interpretation. The interpretation of the one will do for both. I take the one which contains the fuller expression, Col. iii, 16. And to cut off all su-



perfluity of words, I remark that this text includes three brief directions: 1. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly: 2. Teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, (see Col. i, 9:) 3. "Sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs to the Lord, with grace in your hearts," doing all in the name of the the Lord Jesus. I dismiss all, and it is not a little, that has been said on both sides of the question, to connect the "psalms, hymns and spiritual songs," in the latter part of the verse, with "the word of Christ," in the former part; I pass no judgment upon those efforts, as my interpretation is independent of them.

The only question pertinent to the present treatise is, whether the psalms, hymns and spiritual songs mentioned here are those of the Old Testament alone, or any other compositions, together with them, which answer the definition of the terms employed. To say the former, is entirely gratuitous, for David's name is not mentioned, his book is not spoken of, no quotation is made, and the article is not used, not one of the usual ways of making a reference to the Old Testament Scriptures is employed. Why then should the word be understood as referring to the Old Testament Psalms? Only because the word psalm is used. But the word is a general one, decriptive of a certain kind



of composition; and it is properly applied to compositions of this kind, whether they are found in the book of psalms, or elsewhere. Had the apostle meant to confine his reference to the Psalms of David, he would have said, "in *the* psalms, hymns and spiritual songs." And even then, it would not fix the obligation to use them and no others. If we should admit that nothing else but the Psalms of David was referred to or included in this expression, that admission would not help our brethren's case at all. They would still have the only hard part of their case to make out. Suppose I say to my Associate Reformed brother, who is straining this passage to prove that it refers to the Psalms of David alone, Brother, you need not trouble yourself to do it; you need not trace the slender affinity between these terms and the titles of the Psalms; you need not assume that the Ephesians and Colossians would naturally and immediately understand these words to mean the Psalms of David; I will admit it all. Then you admit all I maintain, he gladly replies. Oh no, I do not; for you have yet the hardest part of your task to perform, viz: to show that the expression fixes the obligation to sing the Psalms of David, to the exclusion of every thing else; *hic opus, hic labor est, frater.*

I will illustrate by a plain parallel. Christ

says, "Search *the* Scriptures." This refers indubitably and exclusively to the Old Testament writings, but it does not fix on us the obligation to read those writings to the exclusion of all others. So, admitting the verse under consideration to refer to the Book of Psalms, it does not bind us to sing them to the exclusion of all others.

But I do not admit that it refers exclusively to the Psalms of David. A just regard for the principles of interpretation will not allow me to do so, for the reasons already stated, viz, that there is nothing to identify them in the expression, except the bare use of the *general terms*, descriptive of kinds of compositions, and that is not sufficient.

Ephesus and Colosse were cities in which the Greek language was spoken, and among the Greeks the words psalm and hymn were as well understood and as commonly used as the words song, sonnet and poem are with us; and the bare mention of these would not necessarily suggest the idea of David's Psalms, any more than the word sonnet would suggest to us the sonnets of Petrarch, or the word poem, the poems of Cowper. These terms occur in the Greek classics, and they are each connected with families of above twenty derivative words, from a common root. This fact shows how

extensively they were used, and how readily they would be understood in their general sense.

But it is said, that these terms are the titles of the Psalms, and so identify the reference. It will not pass as good argument. Although the coincidence between these terms and the titles of David's productions were as close as is pretended; yet, the *omission of the article* is fatal to the argument; for we have shown that prophets and prophecies are mentioned in the New Testament, which *certainly do not* refer to those in the old, although there are books in the Old Testament, bearing these titles, and these alone. But, secondly, these terms do not very closely correspond with the titles of the Old Testament songs. This will best appear by comparing them. Take the titles of a few, promiscuously chosen: Psal: 3d, "A psalm of David;" 16th, "A writing of David;" 17th, "A prayer of David;" 30th, "A psalm of a song;" 37th, "A song of David;" 64th, "A song of a psalm;" 89th, "Praise, a song of David;" 103d, "Allelulia;" 120th, "A song of Degrees," &c. A great many have no titles at all. These titles are taken from the Septuagint version, which was generally used in apostolic times. No sufficient resemblance can be traced between the words of the text under consideration and these

titles, to identify a reference, and on such slender grounds no judicious reasoner, unless in extremity, would rest any argument.

But it has been further said by our brethren, to aid their use of this passage, that these churches of Ephesus and Colosse, had the Psalms of David, and they had no other. I incline to the belief that their statement is incorrect in both its parts. These churches were collected in heathen cities; they had lately been converted from heathenism or from Judaism; books were scarce and costly articles then; and it is not very likely that they had much knowledge of the Scriptures, except what they learned from the public reading of them in the synagogues or churches. Secondly, if at Corinth psalms were so abundant, as the production of the spiritual gifts of the disciples, that "every one had a psalm," I know not why psalms of the same kind should be scarce at Colosse.

After all, as I have said above, this effort and show of reasoning is superfluous, for it is not denied by any good interpreter, that the terms of this passage *include* the Psalms of David. We admit, before our brethren laboriously reason the case, that the Psalms of David are *included*; and after they have finished, they fail to show that other scripture songs or other scriptural songs, are

excluded. These verses; by the general, unqualified terms employed in them, enjoin the use of any religious, scriptural songs of praise, without specifying, and of course without excluding inspired or uninspired productions.

If this interpretation be correct, then here we have the long demanded "*scripture warrant*" for the use of other songs of praise beside those contained in the Book of Psalms. Others are not to be used "in the room" of the Bible Psalms, but in addition to them, along with them. Other songs of scripture, properly versified, are no less an inspired psalmody, than those of the Book of Psalms. And hymns and paraphrases constitute an approved uninspired psalmody.

Having now completed another department of the subject, may I not say to dear christian brethren, this is just the case for the exercise of forbearance. The main argument for the exclusive use of the one hundred and fifty Psalms, appears to some persons, defective; the New Testament appears to them, to give a warrant for the use of other orthodox and edifying songs of praise, in addition to those of the Old Testament. May we not hope that some will extend their christian forbearance and fellowship to those who agree with them in every point of faith and order, except this? And if we may hope for con-

ciliation between those who differ only about the exclusive use of Bible Psalms; we may hope, with even more confidence for such reconciliation between those who only differ about the obligation to restrict ourselves to the Scotch version, or any other particular one. If we are not perfectly agreed in all things "whereunto we have attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing."

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## CHAPTER VIII.

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### POSITIVE ARGUMENT, FROM THE HISTORY OF THE ANCIENT CHURCH.

As the mind naturally follows the onward progress of things, the inquirer after truth on this subject will ask, what was the usage of the early church, in relation to Psalmody? Let it be borne in mind, that for the interpretation of Scripture we do not require the aid of the ancient christian writers, we having the oracles of God ourselves, and as good helps for understanding them as they had. But, as historians, they are of use to us; nor are they silent concerning the order and mode of worship in their times.



We do not refer to them as authority, or for argument, but for information.

Before giving the testimony of christian writers, I will notice an incidental reference to the custom of christians, in the celebrated letter of Pliny to Trajan. Pliny was thirty-seven years old, at the time of the death of the apostle John, and this letter was written in the very beginning of the second century. He says of the Christians, "They are accustomed among themselves, alternately, to rehearse a song to Christ as a God." The expression, 'among themselves, alternately,' *secum invicere*, seems to correspond with the Greek *ἑαυτοῖς*, "to yourselves," in Eph. v, 18, and Col. iii, 16. Beza translates it, *inter vos, mutuo*, between you, reciprocally.

Justin Martyr lived about the middle of the second century, Eusebius mentions his having written a work called *Psaltes*, the Psalmist. Tertullian, a little later in the same century, wrote as follows, in reference to the custom of singing in the church: "Each one is called out into the midst, to sing unto God, either from the *Scriptures* or from *his own mind*, as he is able." *De Scripturis vel de proprio ingenio*. [See Poole's Synopsis on Matt. xxv, 30.]

Eusebius, in his history of the first three centuries, quotes a certain writer, as using the following language to prove against the

Arians, the divinity of Christ, and that it had been held in the church from the beginning: "Who does not know the works of Ireneus and Melito and the rest, in which Christ is announced as God? Whatever Psalms and Hymns *were written by the brethren* from the beginning, celebrate Christ, the Word of God, by asserting his divinity." He also says that Paul of Samosata "stopped the Psalms that were sung in honor of our Lord Jesus Christ, as the late compositions of modern men." In conformity with these and other historical testimonies in the ancient writers, the learned Neander says, "The Hymns used in the worship of God were appealed to, in the second and beginning of the third century, in proof of the incarnation and divinity of Christ." Hist. pp. 192, 376.

I make no comments on these historical testimonies. They show, as plain as language can express it, that hymns of human composition were used in the second century. I have known persons try to pervert some of them to the opposite service, but they have always demonstrated, by their efforts, that it was contrary to the natural meaning and intent of the words. The case from Tertullian has never before, I think, been cited in the discussion of this subject. It would be worth an effort of some practiced sophist,

to try what he could make out of the words "de proprio ingenio," favorable to the *exclusive* use of the Psalms.

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## CHAPTER IX.

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### GLANCE AT THE PSALMODY OF THE REFORMATION PERIOD AND OLD PSALMODY CONTROVERSIES.

It is not probable that the churches of the Reformation were long, if they were for any period, without singing in their public worship. But there is a short interval, in which it is difficult to tell what was the manner of conducting this part of their worship, or what songs were used. They may have continued some of the old Hymns and Chants to which they had been accustomed, and they may have prepared Hymns for themselves. The attention of the Reformers was principally directed to the propagation of the gospel doctrines and the recovery of the people from the errors and superstitions of Popery.

The doctrines of the Reformation, it is well known, spread rapidly in France, and were embraced by persons of the highest

distinction and learning. Many avowed their attachment to them publicly, and many, who made no change in their former relation to the old religious establishment, gave the Reformed doctrines their approbation and influence.

About the year 1540, a French poet, named Clement Marot, who regarded the Reformation with favor, translated the first fifty Psalms into French verse, and dedicated his work, in a somewhat fanciful and flattering style, to Francis I, the reigning monarch, to whom also Calvin dedicated his celebrated Institutes. Marot was a court poet, a popular writer, though not at this time a very exemplary character. His translation of the Psalms was not intended by him for use in the public worship of God, although they afterwards became a powerful auxiliary to the spread of the Reformed religion, by their pervading influence on the minds of the people. He adapted his measures to the popular tunes, which had hitherto been associated with songs, many of which were far from being of a good moral tendency. From their being the work of a popular poet, and from their being fitted to familiar and favorite tunes, and from the novelty of their themes, they soon gained a wide-spread popularity. They were sung by the gallants of the court, and by the nobility, male and

female, and shortly resounded through all the streets of Paris, being sung to the common vaudevilles and street tunes, and often with the accompaniment of the fiddle.

There seemed to be no thought of employing them in the exercise of worship; for, at this time and for twelve or fifteen years afterwards, there was no organized Protestant congregation in Paris. The popish clergy, therefore, made no opposition to them. Indeed, they were so well received at court, that their opposition would have been vain. The Queen's favorite was the sixth, which she sung to a fashionable ditty tune. The Dauphin, fond of hunting, chose the 42d—"As the hart panteth for the water-brooks." Antony, king of Navarre, sung, "Avenge me, O Lord, on mine enemies," &c.

These Psalms, however, soon found their way to persons who knew how to use them in ways more congenial with their intrinsic value. The intelligent and pious christians of Geneva used them in the solemn worship of God. Beza translated the other one hundred Psalms into French verse, and the whole were then printed, in connexion with the Geneva Catechism, and were for a long time popular and useful in celebrating the praises of God, both in Switzerland and in France. The popish clergy, who saw no



heresy in them while they were only sung for amusement, and were carelessly hummed by the people, in their sports and at their work; now, when they came into use in the divine worship, denounced them as full of heresy. And to wean the people from their attachment to them and divert them to a substitute, they actually put forth a versification of the Odes of Horace, a heathen poet, suited to the same fashionable tunes, that were used in singing Marot's Psalms. But the trick did not succeed.

A few years after the adoption of Marot's Psalms in the churches on the continent, an English version was made by the joint labors of several poets of the day. Thomas Sternhold, John Hopkins, Whytingham, Norton, Robert Wisdome, and some others contributed to this work. The principal part of it however, was done by the two first mentioned, and the version is known by their names. Sternhold was, like Marot, a court poet, highly favored and patronized by Henry VIII, and afterwards by Edward VI, in whose reign, in the year 1548, his fifty-one Psalms were published. He held the office of Groom of the Robes to Henry. Hopkins was a clergyman. He versified fifty-eight of the Psalms. Whytingham was also a minister and a Hebrew scholar. He assisted Coverdale in the translation of the Bible



into English; He was the successor of John Knox, in the pastorate of a church in Geneva, and was afterwards dean of Durham, in the English church; a man of learning, strict orthodoxy and irreproachable character. He versified the 100th and 119th Psalms. He also wrote some hymns and versified the Commandments and the Creed. Norton was a lawyer, a strict Calvinist. He translated Calvin's Institutes, in the beginning of the reign of Elizabeth. Wisdome was a minister of the English church. He does not appear to have been much of a poet; he versified the 25th of the collection. He must have written more, for an English writer introduces a precisian as saying—"he had rather hear one of Robert Wisdome's Psalms than the best hymn that a cherubim can sing." The whole collection was finished in ~~1552~~<sup>56</sup> and published in 1562 in connexion with the Prayer Book.

The age of Edward VI and of Elizabeth was characterized by a prevalent passion for Psalm making and Psalm singing. The papists had no religious songs for the people, and their other songs were of the most lewd and immoral character. A new field of literature was now opened, and it was entered by a host of poets, whose productions constituted a most fashionable species of entertainment for all classes of the peo-

ple, who were glad to be freed from the vile trash which had deluged them. Poets that had any pretension to a religious character, were ready to avail themselves of the favoring taste of the times, to drive into merited oblivion the corrupting songs that had, under the regime of the bloody Mary and the papacy, polluted the public morals. Almost every part of the Bible was subjected to the rhyming genius of the age, not that it might be sung, but that it might wear the attractive form demanded by the prevailing taste, and receive thereby the attention of the reading public. Hence didactic and historical portions of the Bible, as well as the poetic and lyric portions, were duly turned into "Englysshe metre."

The whole Book of Psalms was versified by Archbishop Parker, and printed in 1557, but never published. Of his work the following may be taken as a fair and favorable specimen: I retain the peculiar pointing and the old orthography.

To feede my neede: he will me leade

To pastures greene and fat:

He forth brought me: in libertie:

To waters delicate.

My soul and hart: he did convart,

To me he showth the path:

Of right wisnesse: in holiness,

His name such vertue hath.

Yea though I go: through death his wo  
 His vale and shadow wyde: .  
 I fear no dart: with me thou art  
 With rod and staffe to guide.

A version of some of them was made by Lord Surry; of others, by Sir Thomas Wyatt, in 1549; and afterwards a number of them were put into verse by King James I. William Hunnis, a poet of some celebrity in the age of Edward VI, published a work with the following title—"Certayne Psalmes chosen out of the Psalter of David, and drawen furth into Englyshe metre, by William Hunnis, 1550." There was considerable point and smoothness in his style, if we may judge by the following, which was in his last will and testament. What will not men put into metre, when the fashion favors?

"To God my soul I do bequeathe,  
 Because it is owerr,  
 My body to be layd in grave,  
 Where to my friends best known.  
 Executors, I wyll make none,  
 Thereby great stryffe may growe,  
 Because the goodes that I shall leave  
 Wyll not pay all I owe."

Hunnis published many pieces in metre. The titles of some of them are in the quaint alliterative style that was popular at that period. Such are "Seven sobs of a sorrowing soul for sin:" "A handful of Honey-

suckles," containing Blessings out of Deuteronomy, a prayer to Christ, &c. in metre. He also translated the whole Book of Genesis into English rhyme, and the work was entitled a Hive full of Honey—"A Hyve full of Hunnye.'

One of the most remarkable productions was, *The Acts of the Apostles in rhyme*. Its author was a remarkable character, named Christopher Tye, a doctor of music, in Cambridge. He employed his talents, both as a poet and music teacher, in putting into rhyme and tune a historical book. Some of the music of Tye is admired to this day. His work, designed to be sung in the royal chapel, was dedicated "To the vertuous and godlye learned prynce Edward the sixth," in a somewhat protracted effusion of the muse. The following gives a sample of the poetry of the times, and also some information of the extent of the rhyming propensity of that age:

"Your grace may note, from time to time,  
That some doth undertake  
Upon the Psalms to write in rhyme.  
The verse pleasant to make;  
And some doth take in hand to write  
Out of the Book of Kings,  
Because they see your grace delight  
In such like godly things.  
And last of all, I, your poor man,  
Whose doings are full base,

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Yet glad to do the best I can,  
To give unto your grace,  
Have thought it good now to recite  
The stories of the Acts,  
Even of the Twelve as Luke doth write,  
Of all their worthy facts."

He also asserts his implicit fidelity to the original, which seems to have been the honest effort of all the rhyming translators:

"Unto the text I do not add,  
Nor nothing take away,  
And tho' my style is gross and bad,  
The truth perceive you may."

The general character of the efforts in poetry, of these times, is plainness and simplicity. In subsequent times it has often been tried to modernize the old productions, by the substitution of current for obsolete words, by divesting them of their antique forms of expression, and by the adoption of our orthography. But such endeavors have generally proved futile. They impart a mixed and motely character to the works, which lose more in force by the operation, than they gain in beauty. Such efforts have been made more than once on Rouse's version, and have generally resulted in a like failure. Yet these failures do not extinguish the desire for some "improvement of the version of Psalms," nor prevent the repetition of the efforts; nor will they, until

in despair of success, the veneration for antiquity and the force of long habit and predilection is broken through, by a well directed endeavor to make an entirely new version. There are few stronger prejudices than those which are built upon the old gray rocks of "antiquity." Indolence and habit are their two flanking towers. That a thing has been long used, gives it a strong claim to be continued in use; and its long use has rendered it easy, easier than a new thing of the same kind can be. The roughness of style, in a book, is not noticed by one who has become familiar with it. By use and handling it seems smooth to him, while the gentle, easy flow of thought, in a book of different style, is mistaken for flatness and insipidity. He misses the angular, the inverted, the obscure in thought and expression, as a man might miss the pungent seasoning from his food.

All this, as has been illustrated in the pro and con sentiments of christian people, in reference to Rouse's version, which is now over two hundred years old, was felt in reference to Sternhold's when it was less than half that age. Indeed, the parallel is so close, in several respects, between the controversy in that case and the one of which I am writing, that I cannot forbear to notice it further.



George Wither, a poet of the 17th century, turned his attention to the versification of the Psalms. He claims to have used that "simplicity of speech that best becometh the subject," and to have as naturally and plainly expressed the sense of Scripture as most translations in prose have done. His "Hymns and songs of the church" were published in 1623, by licence of King James I. From the following specimen, taken from the first Psalm, he appears to have been as good a poet and translator as Sternhold or Rouse.

"Blest is the man who neither strays  
Where the godless man misguideth,  
Neither stands in sinners' ways,  
Nor in scorers' chair abideth,  
But in God's pure law delights,  
Thereon musing days and nights."

But good George Wither found people, in his day, who were so much attached to the Psalms of Sternhold and Hopkins, which had been in use less than a hundred years, that they would, by no means, allow his version to be sung. Nay, they were shocked at his presumption in attempting a version, after Sternhold and Hopkins had made one, some seventy odd years before. And with a good deal of spirit, he replies to those who charged him with "indecently obtruding himself upon the divine calling"—

"I wonder what 'divine calling' Hopkins and Sternhold had more than I have, that their metrical Psalms may be allowed of rather than my Hymns! Surely, if to be grooms of the privy chamber were sufficient to qualify the n, that profession that I am of (the law) may as well fit me for what I have undertaken.

Wither not only calls in question the "divine calling" of Sternhold and Hopkins, but he ventures, as some have done with Rouse's, to make some criticisms on their performance. With great modesty and candor, he exonerates himself from blame in so doing. He says—

"Excuse me, if I seem a little too plain in discovering the faultiness of that whereof so many are *overweening*; for I do it, not to disparage the pious endeavors of those who took pains in that translation; but rather commending their laborious and christian intention, do acknowledge that (considering the *times they lived in* and of what quality they were) they made such a worthy attempt as may justly shame us who come after; *to see it no better seconded* during all the flourishing times that have followed that troublesome age, especially seeing how curiously our language and expression are refined in our trivial discourses."

There is excellent good sense in these observations. Why should the improvements in language, which are carefully studied and highly prized in our "trivial" that is, our ordinary discourses—our sermons, our religious treatises, and in all our litera-

ture—be sedulously excluded from our songs of praise? To have versified the Psalms in the 16th or 17th century, does not give a person any better claim to a “divine calling,” and does not stamp upon his work a “divine warrant,” any more than it does, to have done the same thing in the 19th century. Nor is there any impropriety in trying to improve upon a former effort made by others: their work was performed with a good intent, and with good success, “considering the times they lived in.” But “it may justly shame us who come after,” if with means and opportunity of improving upon it, in the “language and expression,” we refuse to do it. This is just what the Associate Reformed church does, in reference to Rouse’s version, which is now over two hundred years old.

During these two hundred years, very great changes have occurred in language and the style of expression. And it is not strange, if some works that were formerly grave, clear and respectable, should have contracted such an air of quaintness and obscurity, as to be neither attractive nor edifying. There is a fashion in literature, as well as in dress. And the impress of fashion is more observable on poetry than on prose, because it is more susceptible of the gay and ornamental. Hence antique

poetry is more likely than prose to be neglected, as difficult to understand, or to be ridiculed, as quaint and comical. In this treatment our versification of Psalms has shared, in common with other productions of the seventeenth century. The sacredness of its themes, and the frequent beauty and simplicity of its measures, have aided to maintain its position and repute in the church, although they have not been able to protect its many faults and weaknesses from criticism. And while, by the concurring verdicts of parties receiving and parties rejecting this version, its dress and air are not approximate to the divine excellence of the original, the culpability of those who retain it *with* its faults, is scarcely less than that of those who reject it *for* its faults.

The versifying of Psalms, then, was common in the reformation period of the church; and the use of paraphrases and hymns was not deemed derogatory to the inspired Psalter. They were intended not to supersede, but as Withers says, "*to keep company with David's Psalms.*" This is the same idea that is expressed in the Act of the Associate Reformed Synod, in 1793, which censures as a corruption of the worship, "*the substitution of devotional songs, composed by uninspired men, in the place of the sacred songs of Scripture.*"

## CHAPTER X.

## PSALMODY IN THE OLD SCOTTISH CHURCHES.

The doctrine, that it is wrong to sing in the praise of God anything except the one hundred and fifty Psalms of the Old Testament, was never held by the church of Scotland. Neither did the Secession church in Scotland take that ground. The church of Scotland adopted Rouse's version in the year 1649, after it had been under consideration for some time. In 1647, in the 18th Session of the Assembly, an Act was passed for examining the labors of Mr. Zachary Boyd, upon the other scripture-songs; which shows that the church of Scotland, at that early period, even while they had Rouse's version of the Psalms under consideration, contemplated the enlargement of their Psalmody. The same thing was contemplated and attempted by the Secession church, a hundred years later, that is, immediately after their secession from the established church. The truth of both these statements will appear from the testimonies which I shall shortly give.



I am aware that the contrary is affirmed by our brethren, who desire to enlist the testimony of the Scottish church in favor of their views. And for this purpose they lay great stress on the "deliverance" of the Assembly and the Act of Parliament, which "ordain" the use of the new version, Rouse's, and "discharge all the old paraphrases" or versions. This is made to mean, that the church of Scotland appointed these Psalms to be used, to the exclusion of every thing else, in the praise of God. If this were their meaning, why did they take into consideration Mr. Zachary Boyd's labors upon the other scripture songs? No, it is not their meaning. But having satisfied themselves of the excellence of the new version of *the Psalms*, they adopted it, and "ordained" it to be used in praising God, so far as the *Book of Psalms* was concerned; but they still designed to add to this, metrical versions of the "*other songs of Scripture*." The design demonstrates their views of the subject, and proves conclusively that they had very different views from those brethren in this country, who regard the singing even of scripture songs, besides the Psalms to be a corruption of divine worship. Why they did not carry out their design, I have not the means of knowing. Perhaps the labors of Mr. Zachary Boyd



were not found to be satisfactory. From all accounts of his performance in the department of versification, I do not wonder that the Assembly declined his production. But, I repeat, their design to enlarge their Psalmody as clearly proves their belief of its propriety, as the accomplishment of it would have done.

And it was a design which the church of Scotland did not relinquish, for, in the Assembly of 1701, Session 4th, "The scripture songs of Mr. Patrick Sympson, Minister of Renfrew, are recommended to be used in private families, and in order to prepare them for the public use of the church." This recommendation was renewed by the Assembly in 1707. And by the 15th Act, of April, 1708, the Commission of the Assembly is

"Instructed and appointed to consider the printed version of the scripture songs," (not the Psalms) "with the remarks of the Presbyteries thereupon, and after examination thereof they are authorized and empowered to conclude and emit the same, *for the public use* of the church; the present version of the Psalms" (that is Rouse's) "having been ordered in the *same manner*, in the year 1649."

These statements are taken from Stewart of Pardovan's Collection of the Acts of the church of Scotland. And they fully prove, that no such notion as that which prevails

in the Associate Reformed Synod of the West, had any place in the minds of those noble and godly men. It is nugatory to attempt to evade the conclusion drawn from these historical facts. And it is also useless to refer to the Act of Assembly and the Act of Parliament of 1650, ordaining the new "paraphrase of the Psalms," and "discharging," that is, prohibiting the old paraphrase of the Psalms, which had hitherto been used; and the same may be said of the warm recommendation of Rouse's version, by Owen, Manton and others, for these relate *only* to the Psalms, and not to the "other scripture songs," the paraphrases of which were yet under consideration, and which do not appear to have been satisfactorily finished, until the year 1708, as has been stated above.

But, in order to turn the point of this argument, it may be said, much more absurd things have been said by controversialists on this subject, in their extremity—that the Scottish church was a corrupt body, as was shown by the necessity for secession from it. When was it a corrupt body? Was it in 1647, when the labors of Mr. Zachary Boyd on the "other scripture songs" were examined by the Assembly, with reference to the enlargement of the church's Psalmody? This was only two or

three years anterior to the time that Rouse's version was adopted; it was in the very era of the Westminster Assembly. Whether it was a corrupt body in 1708, or whether it was not, are questions that have no pertinency on this subject. The corruption of the body which, in 1733-7, rendered the secession of the Erskines, in their judgment, necessary, had no connexion with the subject of Psalmody. It is well known, that it was nothing in the mode of worship, or even in the doctrine of the church, that occasioned the secession; but matters connected with ecclesiastical administration by corrupt judicatories. Indeed, the early seceders were careful to say, that they did not separate from the church but from a corrupt dominant party in it. But Psalmody certainly had no connexion with that separation.

It has before been said, that the original seceders in Scotland did not hold the sentiment that has unfortunately crept into the Associate Reformed church. Ralph Erskine, one of those original seceders, will be admitted as good authority. And his testimony, I trust, will also be taken as to the sound condition of the church of Scotland, when she undertook to enlarge her Psalmody. Read his words:

"The work of turning *all the rest of the scripture songs* into meter, as the Psalms of David are, and *for the same*

*public use*, was proposed by the church of Scotland, more than one hundred years ago, and that *in one of the most noted periods of reformation*; particularly by an Act of Assembly, August 28th, 1647." [See Erskine's preface to his Scripture Songs, in the 10th volume of his Works.

But this is not all that we learn from Erskine. He says, in the same preface, that he was recommended publicly by the Associate Presbytery, in 1747, to versify the other "scripture songs," that they might be sung as the Psalms of David were. And this great and godly man, one of the original fathers of the Secession church, undertook the work prescribed to him by the Associate Presbytery in 1747, and actually accomplished the greater part of it. That is, he turned into metre the poetical portions of the Old and New Testaments; and besides, wrote a large number of Hymns, which fall, we presume, under the head of "human compositions." Erskine's attention was, for a short time, and the church's attention was, for a long time, turned away from this useful design, by the breaking out of the unhappy controversy about the Burgess Oath, which eventually divided the body. These fruits of Erskine's labors may be seen in the 10th volume of his Works.

Erskine's views on Psalmody, which coincided with those of the church of Scotland, in one of her "*most noted periods of reform-*

ation," and also with those of the Secession church, in the days of her primitive purity and integrity, were very different from those which now prevail in our part of the country, among the churches which have, by ecclesiastical lineage, descended from Fisher and the Erskines.

Let it not be said, that he was merely exercising his poetical talents, as men do now-a-days, for the recreation or edification of readers, with no design of having his verses sung in the worship of God, for he says—

"As the poems and songs here written, are in the form of what is called rhyme and common metre, so the reason thereof is, to answer the design proposed to me, of making the scripture songs adapted to the common tunes, so as it may be practicable *to sing them as we do the Psalms of David.*" [Defence of Rhyme and Metre

It appears further, that Erskine differed from some of his ecclesiastical descendants, in this country, not only on the subject of "other scripture songs," but also in relation to *paraphrases and imitations.*

"If more seem to be said, upon any verse in this song, than is *directly imported in it*, I hope it will be reckoned *no great fault*, if what is said be deducible from it, or necessary for the further explication of it, and for *adapting* this paraphrase upon an *Old Testament song* to a *New Testament dispensation.*" [Pref. to Paraphrase on the Song of Solomon.

Should the reader apprehend from this last expression, that Ralph Erskine had been unduly familiar with Dr. Watt's views of Psalmody, as set forth in his notorious "Preface," I cannot say that he is much mistaken. The name of Dr. Watts, I am aware, is not much revered or loved by those whose views I have been examining. His Psalms and Hymns are believed to be very bad productions, by hundreds of good people who have never read or seen them. And his Preface to them, is regarded as little, if any, short of blank blasphemy. To such injustice does party feeling urge even good men, when chafed and heated in sectarian strifes. And how refreshing it is, to read the noble ingenuous testimony of such a man as Erskine to the excellency of such a man as Watts. He says—

"A famous and religious poet, in his Preface to his excellent Hymns and Spiritual Songs," &c. [Preface to Paraphrase of Song of Solomon.

It appears that Erskine not only read and approved of Dr. Watts' Hymns, but that he submitted his own productions to Dr. Watts' inspection; for he says—

"The forementioned eminent poet, by whose remarks, of which I had a little specimen, perhaps the following sheets had been better polished for the public, had his circumstances allowed a more close and full review thereof."



From all that has been said on this part of the subject, there is ample reason for the belief, that the doctrine in the church of Scotland and in the Secession church was quite opposite to that of the Associate Reformed church, and quite in harmony with that of the Presbyterian. The Editor of Ralph Erskine's Works states the correct doctrine in the following style:

"Though the Psalms of David are truly excellent and sublime, containing suitable matter for praise and adoration, &c. yet there are many passages in them peculiarly adapted to the old dispensation of carnal rites and ceremonies, and, on that account, cannot be supposed to be so clear and full of the grace and spirit of the gospel. The consideration hereof hath induced many devout and piously disposed persons, ardently and sincerely to wish that our Psalmody were enlarged, not only by adding some other scripture songs out of the Old Testament, but particularly by selecting a number from the New."

I might leave these historical statements, without a word of comment or application. They must make impressions on every candid mind favorable to the views expressed in the former part of this treatise. It is remarkable that these pointed expressions in a favorite author should not have fallen under the eye of previous writers on the subject of Psalmody. The churches which sing the old version often speak of their

views as harmonizing with those of the Scottish people. But certainly the Scottish people, in the days of the Erskines, did not harmonize with them, on the subject of "other scripture songs." There is a much plainer and stronger resemblance between the views of the Erskine period and those of the Presbyterian church.

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## CHAPTER XI.

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### ARGUMENT FOR THE USE OF SONGS OF PRAISE, FROM THE HISTORY OF THE ASSOCIATE REFORMED CHURCH.

The doctrine prevalent in a church, and the doctrine of the standards of a church, are not always the same thing. This is but saying that a belief may become common in a church, which is at variance with its accredited public confession. Instances of this are too abundant and well known, to require specifications. The same general remark applies to practices in the church, particularly those that are connected with public worship. Both these statements are true of the Associate Reformed church, in relation to Psalmody. Neither the general

belief nor the universal practice, in the West, are supported by the standards of the body. Now, as we are not obliged to estimate our orthodoxy by the conformity of our sentiments to those of others—measuring ourselves by ourselves—as our neighbor, or our minister, or any prominent member in the church, is neither the exponent nor the pattern of our belief, we are clearly bound to look for the real doctrines of the church, in the authorized *standards* of the church. Well, what is the doctrine of the Associate Reformed church, on Psalmody? It is expressed in the following words of the *Directory*:

“It is the Will of God, that the sacred songs contained in the Book of Psalms, be sung in his worship, both public and private, to the end of the world; and the rich variety and perfect purity of their matter, the blessing of God upon them in every age, and the edification of the church thence arising, set the propriety of singing them in a convincing light: nor shall any compositions merely human be sung in any of the Associate Reformed churches.” [Book 3, Ch. 2, Sec. 3.]

On the first and principal part of this article, there is entire unanimity in the church: all agree that it is right to sing the sacred songs contained in the Book of Psalms. But the article does not exclude or prohibit *other* scripture songs, besides the Psalms; and therefore, the prevailing belief

which does so, is *astray* from the Directory and unsupported by it. But on the clause about human composures, there always has been, and is now great diversity of sentiment, in our church. Many have understood it to be intended as a rule for regulating the singing in our own congregations, and not to be binding on our ministers or our people when worshipping in churches of other denominations. But whether this was the intention of the framers of the Directory or not, it is very certain that the clause referred to, does not exclude from our use the other scripture songs of praise; and our brethren, in making that exclusion, can give no higher authority for it, than the "commandments of men" of very recent times. Surely, the Song of Solomon is not a "composure merely human;" the lofty strains of the evangelical prophet are not human composures; the songs of praise in the Apocalypse are not human composures. Why, then, are we prohibited from using them in the offering of praise? Our standards do not forbid it, but our brethren do.

Our present standards, containing the above clause, were adopted in the year 1799. It is important to note, that this ambiguous clause about "composures merely human," was introduced as a *compromise* of

conflicting views. The *original* "Draught of an Overture for the Government, Worship and Discipline of the Associate Reformed Church" was printed 1796, and after receiving a sort of general sanction by Synod, was sent down to Presbyteries for their examination and judgment. The article in this original Draft, shows that it was never the thought or intention of the framers of our Directory to restrict the church, in its praises, to the Book of Psalms. The article is as follows :

"It is the will of God, that the sacred songs contained in the Book of Psalms be sung in his worship to the end of the world : *besides which other songs of scripture may be added to the system of Psalmody*, as the judicatories of the church shall find for edification; and the rich variety and perfect purity of their matter," &c.

The next article in the same original Draft says—

"The *substitution* of devotional songs by uninspired men, *in the room* of the scripture Psalmody, on the principle that the Book of Psalms or any part thereof are unfit for New Testament worship, is a grievous corruption of the worship of God, and is therefore utterly prohibited in all the Associate Reformed churches."

In the former article, the use of the other songs of scripture is allowed and commended; for the concluding expressions, "the rich variety," &c. are equally applied to the Psalms and to other scripture songs. The

first part of the former article and the whole of the latter are opposed to those who say that the Psalms are *not fit* for New Testament worship; but they do not teach that the Psalms alone are fit. The doctrine of these articles is not, that the use of other sacred songs, *in addition to the Psalms*, is a corruption of worship, but that the *substitution of others in the room* of the Psalms is a corruption. It was left for our brethren of recent times, to find out that is like the sin of Nadab and Abihu, to sing anything besides the one hundred and fifty Psalms.

Although this original Draft was not finally adopted as a part of our standards, yet the fact that it was, by the Synod, sent down to the Presbyteries for their judgment, shows what was the prevalent feeling of the church at the time. I have said that the clause in our standards, "nor shall any composures merely human," &c. was introduced by compromise. This cannot be made clear in any way so well as by a contemporaneous letter from a prominent member of Synod. We have seen what the original Draft was, and we know what was actually adopted and is in the standards of the church, now, what was the occasion and manner of making the change?

The following extract of a letter from Dr. J. M. Mason to Dr. A. Proudfit show this,



and it shows a good deal more; it lets us know what were his views of the subject, and his anticipations in relation to it. It is dated, "New York, Sept. 6, 1797," while the original draft was before the Presbyteries.

"By a letter from Mr. Hemphill, which is next to official from the Presbytery of South Carolina, I am informed that the clause about adding other scripture songs to the compilation of Psalmody will, if persisted in, hinder the reception of the Directory in that Presbytery. He says that neither he nor his brethren wish to dictate to us on that subject, that they are willing we should *cherish our own views*, but cannot consent to admit as a term of communion for themselves, a principle of the correctness of which they are not satisfied; and that if we will drop the phrase, "besides which other scripture songs may be added," &c. and alter the concluding one thus, 'Nor shall any Psalms of mere human composition be added,' or something similar, they *will not ask the insertion of any clause rejecting the principle we have established*; and every thing will go smoothe and easy."

"I have received the judgment of the First Presbytery of Pennsylvania, and of the Presbytery of New York both of which unanimously are, that it is best for the peace and edification of the church, to accede to the proposal. I wish you to procure the sentiments of your Presbytery without delay, and let me know, as the work will be printed off before the meeting of Synod. There is a powerful reason, in my judgment, for agreeing to the alteration. As the clause *now*" (that is, in the original Draft.) "recognizes the principle of scriptural Psal-

mody, it is so *restricted* as to be in fact useless: we are *tied down to other songs of scripture* literally versified. By erasing the clause we get rid of the restriction, and should the Lord prepare the churches, at some future period, for an *enlarged system of Psalmody*, they will be able to apply the principle in a more liberal and effective manner than is possible under the existing provision."

From these statements it is perfectly evident, that the much discussed clause in our Directory, "nor shall any composures merely human," &c. was adopted by the framers of our standards, on the principle of compromise; and that it was adopted with the understanding and avowal that it was less restricted in its meaning than the clause in the original Draft, which it superseded. Even the brethren in Carolina did not ask the insertion of anything that would reject the principle of a Psalmody more extended than the Book of Psalms. They were not "fully satisfied" of the correctness of that principle, but as the rest of the church was fully satisfied of it, they would not dictate, but they would propose a different phrase, and this proposal the rest of the church, for peace and edification, acceded to.

I now invite the reader's attention to other periods of the history of the Associate Reformed Church: and whether we take a

view of the period anterior, or of that subsequent to 1799, we will discover a perpetual diversity of sentiment on the subject of psalmody. Take the earlier period. Our church was formed in 1782. Four years afterwards, in 1786, the version of Tate & Brady, the Episcopal Psalmody, was used in the Associate Reformed Church in Boston. The Synod, in the latter year, disapproved of this as an innovation. But, that this did not settle the matter, or show an entire uniformity of sentiment, is evident from the fact that the synod, next year, that is, in 1787, appointed a committee to prepare and publish an overture for the illustration of the doctrines of our Confession, in which the subject of psalmody was formally introduced. This publication was issued before the next meeting in 1788. It was called up at this meeting, but it was, on motion, resolved, that the consideration of it be postponed till the next year, and that the members be all warmly solicited to attend, and that they be fully prepared to examine it with candor and impartiality. (Minutes of 1788.)

At this same meeting, in view of the difficulties in Rev. D. Annan's congregation, on the subject of psalmody, it was,

"Resolved, That the members of Synod be solicited to make themselves acquainted with Watts' version, and Brady's version, and any other version now used by any

of the Reformed Churches, that they may be prepared to speak on the subject at the meeting of the Synod next year. And further agreed to *recommend* it to Mr. D. Annan and his session, to use as formerly, the Scots version."—(Minutes of 1788, pp. 59. 60.)

Notwithstanding this urgent appeal to the members of Synod, when they came together next year, 1789, they had not made up their minds on the subject of psalmody, and all they did was to refer the consideration of the overture, in which it was treated of, to the presbyteries. The next year, 1790, after it had been published three years, after it had been before two meetings of the Synod, and one year in the consideration of Presbyteries, the Synod of the Associate Reformed Church recommended the overture "as being in substance an *excellent and instructive* exhibition of their views of the confession."

Let the reader now attentively read the following sentences of this overture, approved by the Synod after three years consideration:

"We are not afraid to assert and vindicate the *propriety* of using the Psalms and songs of the Old Testament in the praise of God." "We are extremely sorry to observe a *growing disrelish*, in some churches, for the Psalms of David, and other songs of Scripture. We could wish for a more finished and poetical version of these than any yet given to the churches. And we do not mean to say, that hymns of human compositions may not

*be lawfully used in any case whatsoever. But we think it safest generally, to adhere to a Scriptural Psalmody."*

Now what have we here? The doctrine of our modern champions of psalmody? The doctrine, that to sing anything beside the one hundred and fifty Psalms is a corruption of worship? No, nothing of the kind. But we have the doctrine of the church in 1797, and that of our directory in 1799, viz, that the Psalms of the Bible are proper to be sung, and that other scriptural songs may be sung too. In the overture, the ground is taken strongly for the Psalms of David, which there was a disposition, in some quarters, to oppose. Indeed the action of the church, both in the overture here referred to, and in the original and ultimate drafts of the Directory, was all *defensive* of the Psalms, intended to teach that the Old Testament Psalms *were fit to be sung*. I only remark, further, in reference to this period and the sentiments that prevailed in it, that the growing disrelish which our fathers observed with extreme sorrow, has come to a still greater magnitude in our times; for our brethren not only disrelish, but utterly repudiate from their psalmody, those "songs of Scripture," to which our fathers refer.

Were we to examine, in like manner, the period posterior to the adoption of our stand-



ards in 1799, we should find that a similar diversity of opinion prevailed on the subject of psalmody. At different periods, the church has been agitated with discussions and debates upon it. Synods have differed about it, and individuals have done the same. They have never differed about the propriety of singing the Scripture Psalms, but they have never agreed in denying the propriety of singing others. I do not ask the reader, however, to go into this historical review, yet I cannot forbear to state one fact, as it shows how unsettled was the state of the church on this subject, and how little some knew of their own minds: In 1802, the Synod was [applied to, by the Presbytery of the Carolinas, to know the meaning of the expression, "composures merely human," a phrase which they themselves suggested as satisfactory to them, and which, in accommodation to their views, had been adopted in our directory, only three years before!

With respect to the versification, in use in our church, there has been always a desire, cherished and expressed by many, for its improvement. That it needs improvement, has been denied by few. The highest judicatories of the church have, several times, undertaken it. In former times, I mention it simply as a historical fact, and with no invidious purpose, there was a dis-



position in the Associate Church, or at least with some of its members, to lay hold of any such measure, or proposal even, and turn it to the disadvantage of the Associate Reformed Church, by glowing appeals to the fears of those who are wont to regard all changes as identical with defections. To exonerate themselves from blame, the Synod, in 1801, addressed the Presbytery of the Carolinas in the following words:

"It is hoped that neither you, nor those under your inspection, will be discouraged by difficulties, or shaken by the many false reports, which have been and are still circulating to the prejudice of the Synod, such as their using or proposing a new system of psalmody, or their authorizing families or churches under their inspection to do so."

Still the false reports and fears, within or without the church, did not extinguish the desire or paralyze the efforts to obtain an improved version of the psalms. And in 1810, the General Synod unanimously resolved to undertake the matter of procuring one. But, lo! the next year, the Synod of the Carolinas and Georgia, in their report represent that many of their people "*were greatly alarmed* at General Synod's proposal of a new version of psalmody."

Whether this news greatly alarmed the General Synod or not, it is certain that the undertaking fell through, and the new ver-

sion, notwithstanding half a score of efforts since, is still a desideratum, with no great prospect of its being supplied, to alarm any body.

There is abundant evidence, both internal and external, that the object of the fathers of the Associate Reformed Church was, to oppose the sentiment which Dr. Watts was understood to have advanced, viz, That some of the Psalms of David are unfit to be sung in the New Testament Church. It was this, and not the addition of hymns, that gave offence. It was the substitution of his "imitations" of the psalms, *in the room* of the Psalms, and not the use of hymns, that was the ground of complaint. Had Dr. Watts given a fair and close version of all the Psalms, and annexed his hymns and paraphrases, and suppressed some expressions in his preface, I verily believe that the book would have met with little opposition from any quarter; for it would have accorded with the acknowledged wants, and express wishes of the church. It would have been a near approximation to what the church of Scotland attempted in one of her "most noted periods of reformation," and what the secession church desired in the "days of Fisher and the Erskines." But the preface, the fatal omission of some of the psalms, and the very loose paraphrases of

others, excited alarm; and that alarm has ultimately driven a portion of the church to assume an anomalous and unscriptural position, in opposition to every hymn and song of praise, inspired and uninspired alike, except the one hundred and fifty psalms.

But this is not the doctrine of the standards of the church, whether historically or scripturally interpreted. The standards rather teach that it is right to sing other scripture songs. If, therefore, any congregation desired to use paraphrases or versifications of Scripture which express praise to God, there is nothing in the church standards to prevent. Or if individual members or ministers worshipping in the churches of other denominations, choose to join in praising God in an orthodox and spiritual song, they do not expose themselves to legitimate censure by so doing. To debar the people from this privilege is spiritual tyranny, contrary to the spirit and design of our authorized church standards. And it is not less contrary to the spirit and law of God's word.

These remarks may perhaps suggest to the reader the enquiry—Whether, for such a cause, members are ever brought under discipline. To gratify the curiosity that prompts the enquiry, I will state that the cases are not very many, but they do occur

sometimes. Only two instances have occurred within the sphere of my own observation. I refer to them, both as perversions of the ordinance of church discipline, and also as illustrations of the little *practical* use that we make of the important *speculative* distinction which our own writers on Psalmody are careful to assure the public that we maintain—the distinction between good *versions* and *hymns*. It is always said, and that very earnestly and conspicuously, that our contest with Presbyterians is not about versions; we do not contend for a particular version; we want the best version; give us a better version than we have and we are ready to receive it, &c. &c. I have noticed this matter, in a former part of this work, but I am led by the subject to revert to it, and to the cases alluded to, which illustrate the degree of importance which is attached to it, in the estimation of some of our brethren.

One of the cases was as follows: An Elder in one of our churches, spending the night with a Presbyterian friend, at family worship united with the household in singing the following verses of the 92nd Psalm, long metre:

“Sweet is the work, my God, my king,  
To praise thy name, give thanks and sing,  
To show thy love by morning light,  
And talk of all thy truths at night.

Watts.

2. Sweet is the day of sacred rest;  
No mortal care shall seize my breast;  
O! may my heart in tune be found,  
Like David's harp of solemn sound."

For this offence, the man was censured and suspended by the Session, and upon appealing, by the Presbytery. He then appealed to the Synod, but being unable to attend the meeting, accompanied his appeal with a request that the Synod would defer action on it till the next year. But action was not deferred, the sentence of the lower courts was affirmed, and the man was thrown out of the communion of the Associate Reformed church, in which he had been a Ruling Elder, in good and regular standing.

Now, as to the "question about versions:" here is the Scottish version, which may be compared with the above one of Watts:

- "To render thanks unto the Lord  
It is a comely thing,  
And to thy name, O thou most high,  
Due praise aloud to sing:
2. Thy loving kindness to show forth  
When shines the morning light,  
And to declare thy faithfulness  
With pleasure every night.
  3. On a ten stringed instrument,  
Upon the Psaltery;  
And on the harp with solemn sound  
And grave sweet melody."



For the convenience of the reader, making a comparison of the two versions, I subjoin the prose version.

"It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O Most High :

2. To show forth thy loving kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night,

3. Upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery: upon the harp with solemn sound."

Now, upon fair comparison, it appears that Watts' version is as good as Rouse's, of the first two verses in the prose. Watts' second verse is not a close version; but it expresses truthful and devout sentiments, which the author, no doubt, thought were *implied* in the allusions to the temple worship. And in singing them, a devout worshipper may do no more than is allowed, nay, enjoined in the Directory of the Associate Reformed church, "in singing those parts of them [the Psalms] which are expressed in the *ceremonial style*, or describe the circumstances of the writers, or of the church in ancient times, we *should* have our eye upon the *general principles* which are *implied* in them, and which are *applicable* to individuals or to the church in every age." [Book 3, Ch. 3, Sec. 3.]

If it should be said that there are words in Watts' which are not in the prose, it is admitted. And so there are in Rouse's;



for it has been shown before, that there is nothing in the prose to correspond to that sweet and graphic line, so descriptive of what church music should be—"grave, sweet melody."

The other case did not end so unhappily, in the exclusion of a person from the communion of the church. Indeed, it was rather comical than tragical, throughout. A young minister, preaching in a Presbyterian church, gave out for singing the 100th Psalm, long metre; that is, one of Watts' Psalms. Whether it was from embarrassment, or forgetfulness, or *practical* views of the "question of versions," or indifference, I do not know. But so it was; and the Psalm was sung by the congregation, without their knowing that any wrong had been done. Some gossip, however, treasured up this part of the service for future use; and on the earliest opportunity, one of the watchful guardians of orthodoxy and order solemnly spread the case before the Presbytery, and proposed something like a censure on the young brother—a mild one, it is true—just enough to make him think he had done something wrong.

Well here again, in the discussion, the "question of versions" came fairly up, and the important speculative distinction was again fairly dodged in practice. One of the

members called attention to that distinction by saying, with more diversion to himself, probably, than to his brethren, "I am scarcely prepared to vote for this resolution. We have the highest personal authority in the church for saying that our controversy with Presbyterians is *not about versions*. I am not able, at this moment, to say whether the 100th Psalm of Watts is a good version of David's Psalm or not. If it is, then according to our own *theory* no fault has been committed, and surely we would not censure a person for singing a good version of a Bible Psalm. But, *non est tanti*—the remark has not weight enough to defeat or defer the action. I have the resolution before me: it is something of a curiosity.

Now, if the reader will compare the 100th Psalm, first part, in the Presbyterian book, and the 100th Psalm, long metre, in the Associate Reformed book, with the prose translation in the Bible, he will find that the former is the *closer paraphrase of the two!*

In these two cases, then, we see the judicatories of the church chastizing one person out of their communion, and showing the rod of discipline to another, for doing what is not forbidden in the word of God, what is not forbidden in the church standards, and what is in perfect agreement with

their own *theory* and their own repeated statements on the "question of versions."

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## CHAPTER XII.

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### SOME ARGUMENTS OF A SECONDARY CLASS NOTICED.

Although I might here suspend my examination of this subject, with the conviction that enough had been done to show the incorrectness and novelty of the notion prevalent in the Associate Reformed church, yet, lest I should appear forgetful or unjust, I will briefly notice some other arguments of a subordinate character.

1. It is said, "in singing the Psalms of David, the worshipper has a feeling of confidence that what he is singing is acceptable to God, which he cannot have in singing other hymns and paraphrases." In using this argument, it is common to exhibit strong contrasts between Bible Psalms and human composures; the words of inspiration and the tinkling fancies of poets; translations and imitations; the songs of Zion and those

of Parnassus. But let us look at it, with the eyes of candor and in the light of logic and scripture. I answer, then,

1st. No man of intelligent piety will place the words of men on a level with the word of God: but a poetical translation of Isaiah's or of John's writings is no more a "human composure" than a like translation of David's Psalms is a human composure. And the confidence that restricts us to the one and repudiates the other, assimilates too nearly to the character of caprice and prejudice, to be entitled to much credit as a ground of argument. Many a person has been confident that he was doing an acceptable service to God, who might better have been employed in some other way.

2nd. In singing hymns, we have the same standard and method of judging of their agreement with the teachings of God's word, that we have for sermons, prayers, books and conduct. If they are approved by that word, why may we not have confidence that they are right? and, if right, why may we not have confidence that they are acceptable to God? If they are not agreeable in sentiment to the word of God, we should reject them. But it is no part of wisdom or piety, to treat the good and the bad alike, rejecting the former as much as the latter.

3d. The odium that has attached to the

idea of "imitations," in this discussion, is more real than reasonable. An imitation of a good thing is good in proportion to the closeness of the resemblance. The best imitation of a Psalm, is what comes nearest to the Psalm itself: even as a book is the best religious book which comes nearest to the Bible. If an imitation claims to be the original, or of equal authority, it is then a counterfeit. But this claim is not made for any version or paraphrase or imitation except ours, which is perpetually called the "Inspired Psalter," "the God-given Psalm Book."

4th. From the mere fact that we are singing the words of scripture, we cannot be sure that we are praising God aright; unless it is certain that those words are never misapplied, never perverted, never misunderstood. The form of words may be used and yet not used rightly; and then the confidence that we are worshipping God acceptably will be a false confidence. This is the fatal delusion in all formalism. The familiar enquiry, often urged with a tingling emphasis on the ear of hymn singers, "Who hath required this at your hands?" (Is. i, 12,) was not addressed to those who failed in the *matter and form* of their service, but who failed in the *spirit* of it, while they observed the form. And the sin of Nadab and Abihu,

so often drawn forth to gleam its minatory terrors on the singers of hymns, did not consist in the adulteration of the incense, but in offering it with strange fire. Both these historical events may be pondered with advantage, as well by those who sing the old Psalms as by those who sing the new, and they may afford admonition to all; to rest not in forms, but to worship God in spirit and in truth; for such worship he approves and accepts.

2. Another argument is, that the churches which have left the Bible Psalms have fallen into errors. By Bible Psalms, here, is meant Rouse's versification of them. I know of no evangelical church that has left the Bible Psalms: I am sure our Presbyterian brethren have not. But churches have fallen into errors, which have not left the versification of them used by us. Arian heresy diffused itself widely in the Presbyterian church in Ireland. The doctrinal error of Arminianism, and the practical error of Moderatism corrupted the church of Scotland. The position of the three great ecclesiastical bodies of that country, at the present time, is peculiarly instructive. In point of orthodoxy and piety, the United Presbyterian and the Free churches are far in advance of the Established church. Yet the Established church uses almost exclu-



sively Rouse's version of the Psalms; while the Free church makes free use of the paraphrases, some of which are Watts' hymns; and the United Presbyterian or Secession church is just now adopting several hundred hymns, in addition to their old Psalmody.

I suppose I may also, without impropriety, refer to matters nearer home. The Seceders used to say that the Associate Reformed church had fallen into grievous errors and corruptions; and their testimony is still lifted up against us. Nay, Seceders, Unions and Covenanters, *all agreeing on Psalmody*, have carried on reciprocal controversies with each other, and have sometimes raised such a dust about each others errors, that most people could not see what their errors were! But they have testified against each other, and, in rare instances, the witness of two out of the three has agreed as to the errors of the third! On two points there is now great unanimity—on the exclusion of all hymns from their system of praise, and the exclusion of each other from church communion.

But it is more important to observe, in reply to this argument, that it seems to attribute to the *singing* of the Psalms, in a particular version, a greater conservative power against error, than belongs to all the ordinances of religion besides—to prayer,

preaching, sacraments, reading the word of God and all! This looks like doing dishonor to the institutions of the Head of the church, which he has appointed for its edification, merely to support a tottering notion of our own. To hear some persons talk, one would suppose they regarded the singing of David's Psalms as the main, if not the only preservative against error, and the singing of hymns, however orthodox and scriptural, as tending so strongly to error, that all other restraining and sanctifying influences are scarcely sufficient to withstand it. The churches, they say, that have fallen into the Unitarian heresies are churches that left the Bible Psalms and took to singing hymns. By this reasoning, addressed to the fears of christians, it is intimated that the singing of hymns is the cause or occasion of the Unitarian errors.

This is poor, short-sighted logic. The handle is as sharp as the point, of such arguments. Our brethren think that hymn-singing is itself a great error and sin: how happens it, then, that the mighty conservative power of singing our Psalter does not keep people from falling into this? If it keeps people from the error of Unitarianism, why does it not keep them from the error of singing hymns? Even admitting the facts to be as alleged, the reasoning

leads to unsound conclusions, because it confounds antecedents with causes, and identifies consequents and effects. I will illustrate this: our brethren say, many people and even churches, that sang songs of human composure in worshipping God, have fallen into the error of Unitarianism; therefore the singing of such composures is to be deprecated. With the same reasoning, it might be answered, many people and even churches, that sang the Scotch version of Psalms, have fallen into the error of hymn-singing; therefore the singing of the Scotch version is to be deprecated.

It is sometimes stated, as a matter of fact, that people who sing other songs of praise, besides the Psalms of David, go off to corrupt churches, and it is implied that they have a great facility in making such transition. In the same way, it might be said, that people go in considerable numbers, from time to time, out of churches which sing David's Psalms exclusively, and join Presbyterian churches. So that, whether this style of reasoning or this allegation of facts be considered, we reach as strong conclusions against the old Psalms as against the new. And the matter in dispute must be settled on other grounds than such sophistries supply.

3. The frequent changes made in the

Psalmody of other churches are adduced as evidences of a defect in the principle of it. I answer, that changes *alone* are no evidence of a defect in the principle; because changes have been made in the strictest kind of scripture Psalmody, and changes are still desired, very generally in our church. Perfection is not claimed for any Psalmody now in use, either in our church or in any other. But I cannot see that admitted imperfection is either diminished or concealed by being left undisturbed; or that it is increased by those efforts at improvement which are made in changes. Improvements have often been prevented by the fear of changing; and have often been condemned under the opprobrious name of innovations. This spirit has convulsed and distracted congregations, when so small a change was made as the giving out of two lines instead of one, or the singing of one line twice over, to suit a tune. I have no doubt, that some good people read with weeping eyes the decree of Church and State which, in 1650, "discharged" the Bible Psalms of Sternhold and Hopkins, and ordained the use of this new paraphrase of Mr. Rouse, then recently imported from England. So, at a later date, when Tate and Brady's version was introduced into the English church, many people were greatly displeased at the

change, and, as Cowper playfully said, "highly disgusted at the innovation, they stick as obstinately to the old version as to the Old style."

After all, the only difference between the Presbyterians and us in this particular is, that we have desired change, and they have made it; we have wished for an improvement of the Psalmody, they have wished for it and tried to get it.

4. One of the most extraordinary statements ever made on this subject is, that the Psalmody of other churches is sectarian, while ours is altogether divested of that character. This singular idea is put forth in a doctrinal and historical tract, issued by our General Synod. In itself and its attendant reasonings, it is precisely like those of the errorists who oppose creeds and confessions. "Our Psalmody is as broad as the Bible," (which, by the way, is not quite true, as long as we reject a great number of Bible songs,) "it is the very word of God, it is inspired and infallible; while others are formed by sects to suit their own views, man-made productions," &c. &c. This is just the style of those who make the Bible, as they say, their creed, and refuse those useful formularies which all orthodox and evangelical churches are accustomed to use.

We might apply this notion to prayers as



well as to praises, and deny the right to pray in any other words but those of scripture: all such prayers might be called man-made, and sectarian, and lacking in catholicity. We have more authority for such restriction in prayers than in praises. Our Savior said, "when ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven," &c. but he has not said, when ye sing, sing the Psalms of David. A similar strain of remark might be made on the *ordinance* of preaching sermons, but I will not pursue it.

It is remarkable, that while our Psalmody is claimed to be the only unsectarian system extant, no church makes its Psalmody more prominent, as a distinctive peculiarity of sect. It is *pre-eminently* our distinction: on this article we separate from other denominations: we make it a term of communion: it is conspicuous in all our church policy. And yet, strange to say, it is the only unsectarian and real catholic Psalmody in the world! If it is not sectarian in itself, we have done what we could to make it so.

I will now notice some of the minor argumentation against the exclusive use of the Book of Psalms in praising God.

1. An objection has been raised on the ground that some of the Psalms contain much matter that was personal to the writers, and peculiar to the times, historical



narrative and ceremonial language. It is not disparaging to the Book of Psalms, to make a distinction between these things and those of general interest and obligation, any more than it is to the Book of Exodus, to make a similar distinction between the moral and the ceremonial laws recorded in it. This is the distinction made by Dr. Watts, which has given so much offence. The local, personal and ceremonial parts of the Psalms, he deemed not to be suited to the use of persons worshipping in the church, under its New Testament dispensation. I verily believe, that he intended to express the same idea that is expressed in the Directory of the Associate Reformed church, and has been expressed a thousand times in "prefacing the Psalms," by our ministers, viz. "In singing those parts of them (the Psalms) which are expressed in ceremonial style, or describe the circumstances of the writers, or of the church in ancient times, we *should have our eye upon the general principles* which are implied in them, and which are applicable to individuals or to the church in any age." [Book 3, Ch. 3, Sec. 3.

Some of the Psalms themselves inform us of the special occasions on which they were composed and of the particular and personal application of them in the first place. Of

others we have no such information. We have "A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son;" (the 3d,) "A Psalm of David, when he changed his behavior before Abimelech; who drove him away, and he departed, (34th;)" "A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him after he had gone in to Bathsheba, (51st.) There are many others of the same class. Whether they were ever sung on any other occasion, or at any other time, we have not the means of knowing. The explicit mention of the particular occasion would favor the idea that they were not intended for repetition; but the general and devotional strain of the pieces themselves seems to fit them for universal use.

I do not consider the personal and ceremonial expressions found in the Psalms, as any objection to the singing of them; provided the worshipper sings them with understanding and with faith, as enjoined in the Directory. It does not, however, appear to make much difference whether the "general principles" contained in such parts of the Psalms, be set before the worshipper in a short explanatory lecture, as in the Associate Reformed church, or by an explanatory paraphrase, as in the Presbyterian. In view of the above important clause of the Directory, it is to be regretted that the

practice of "explaining the Psalm" is going out of use in the church, whereby the people will be exposed to the danger of not keeping their eye upon the general principles implied in the expressions referred to, and applicable to themselves.

2. It is objected to our mode of praise, that the name of Jesus is never heard in it. I have no doubt that many and many a believing worshipper of Jesus Christ has found him in the Psalms, and has sweetly praised him with these songs of Zion. But still, he is not, in the Psalms or in any part of the Old Testament scriptures, revealed so plainly or so fully as in the New. To suppose that he is, is contrary to the claims and design of both. And now that he has been personally revealed in the flesh; and the name of JESUS figures in the evangelic history, from the annunciation to the cross; and he is known by that glorious appellation in heaven, earth and hell, it seems, *it seems* as though the name of Jesus should be heard in the praises of those whom he has loved, whom he has bought with his blood, whom he has made kings and priests unto God. The Scriptures make much of that worthy name: "Thou shalt call his name Jesus; because he shall save his people from their sins."—Matt. i, 21. "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the

Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto God and the Father by him.”—Col. iii, 17. “By him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name.”—Heb. xiii, 15. And if we will consider it candidly, it is a sad thing, that we pass through our entire christian life, even to the threshold of heaven, loving him, serving him, saved by him, and yet, without his dear name Jesus being ever heard in our songs of praise! Would a stranger attending in our places of worship, be able to report of us as was done of the christians in the days of Pliny, that we “sing hymns to Christ as God?” He might learn it from our sermons, from our prayers, from our explanations of the Psalms, but not from our singing itself.

3. An argument for singing hymns of human composition, has been drawn from the admitted propriety of conceiving our thoughts and uttering our words in prayer. The usual colloquial form of expressing this idea is, “we may use our own words in praise as well as in prayer.” And the usual way of answering this statement is, that the great majority of christians do not and cannot use *their own* words, in their hymns of praise. There is here a turn on the expression, “our own words.” But it

is not meant, that each individual must compose all the hymns or any of the hymns that he sings: it is only meant that he may use human composition, as distinguished from the inspired. And further this answer intimates that but few persons can make hymns of praise: two difficulties are in the way, the one a theological and the other a literary difficulty.

As to the first, our brethren affirm that man cannot know what attributes and excellencies to ascribe to God. This seems to overlook all the knowledge of God which we obtain from Moses and the Prophets, from Christ and the Apostles. It has often been said, in praise of the Psalms, that they contain an epitome of all the truths of the Bible, but I have never heard it said, that they teach us more than all the rest of the Bible does, what God is and what glories to ascribe to him. Yet this notion seems to imply as much. But the other parts of holy Scripture are as authentic a revelation of what God is and of what he does, as the Psalms are: and we could praise him intelligently even if all the precious Psalms of the Bible were lost. If we use the words of Paul or of John, we may have as much confidence that our ascriptions are correct, as we could have when using those of David and Asaph; "O the depth of the riches

both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"—Rom. xi, 33. "To the king eternal, immortal and invisible," &c.—1 Tim. i, 17. "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever, amen."—Rev. i, 5, 6. These divine praises are found in the Scriptures, but not in the Psalms. They are some of those *other scripture songs* or praises, which our brethren say it is wrong to sing in the worship of God.

Now as to the literary difficulty, that is in the way of praising God in *our own* words. The difficulty is imaginary, and springs from erroneous notions of what a hymn is. It is not necessary to a hymn, that it should be in rhyme, or in any regular metre, or suited to any particular tune. A hymn is an ascription of praise to God, expressed in the style of excited and elevated devotional feeling. "Hosanna to the son of David," was a hymn to Christ. Some christians have been accustomed, in their private devotions, to utter their thoughts and express their feelings, their desires and their praises, in a musical tone of voice, without any regard to rhyme, tune



or measure. It has a tendency to confine the thoughts and make the devotional impressions more deep, and to elevate the affections more to God. This was undoubtedly the *hymning* spoken of in several places in the New Testament. Such were the songs of Moses, of Deborah, of Simeon, and of others which have been mentioned. And such, probably, were the "songs in the night," Job xxxv, 10. And it is just as easy for a christian who is intelligent and devout, to make a hymn, as it is to make a prayer. The difficulty, then, is imaginary. The propriety of doing it has before been shown at length. And the argument that shows it, embraces hymns made by our fellow men, equally with those which each person may make for himself.

I might multiply these minor arguments for the use of other songs of praise, besides the one hundred and fifty psalms, but I will forbear. I will forbear, also, to recapitulate the reasonings pursued throughout this treatise. The smallness of the Book renders this unnecessary. The proof of the paraphrastic character of our psalter; the refutation of the main argument for the exclusive use of this versification or of the psalms in any version; the positive argument from Scripture showing a divine warrant for the use of other psalms, hymns,

and spiritual songs; the historical evidence in favor of the practice in Apostolic times, in the early church, at the Reformation, in the church of Scotland and the Secession, and in the Associate Reformed church; the proof drawn from the fact that the standards of the church do not forbid it—all these things will occur to the attentive reader's mind, and will persuade him that the doctrine of exclusive use, as held by many in the A. R. Church, is an unscriptural and very modern innovation.

My object in adducing these arguments and historical facts, has been to show to my brethren that their position is not on so firm a basis, that they may be uncompromising and unaccommodating to those christians who differ from them on this point. I have attempted honestly to exhibit the doctrine of Scripture, and the teaching of history, on this subject. I have tried to do it with candor and kindness. And it has been done with a confidence in the reader's intelligence and probity, which has exempted me from the humiliating necessity of perpetually reminding him of the strength of the arguments and of the utter impossibility of withstanding them. I hope I have not erred in leaving the discovery of this to the reader's own discernment. It is no undue assurance, I trust, to claim that there

is argument enough to prove, that the use of other songs of praise may be made a subject of forbearance, and that to exclude from our christian fellowship those who use them, is contrary both to the word of God and our own church standards. And if the doctrine that would bind us to the exclusive use of the *Bible psalms*, and make that a term of communion, is contrary to Scripture and to our standards; much more contrary is that doctrine, which would bind us, in like manner, to the exclusive use of *our version*.

O, will not brethren, then, leave this subject where scripture and reason place it? Shall it ever continue a stumbling stone and occasion of strife and enmity? Must the high interests of the soul and of Christ be sacrificed on this Baal altar of party prejudice? Shall a "doubtful disputation" separate brethren whom heaven will unite, partakers of the same grace, and professors of the same precious faith? We have a clear divine warrant for the communion of saints. We have unequivocal and reiterated injunctions and earnest entreaties, in the Scriptures, to maintain the unity of the spirit and the bonds of peace. And we have imperious calls, in the word and providence of God, to strive earnestly and jointly for the faith of the Gospel. Shall all this be un-

heard and unheeded, through the din of strife raised by a few combatants about psalmody? The peace and amity which we advocate requires no sacrifice of principle; no change of practice, even. We may still sing as we have done, but let us restore the broken chain of friendly fellowship with our brethren. Christians, has not this one-barred fence kept you long enough asunder? Bleeding church of Christ, may thy children cease to inflict wounds on thee!

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## CHAPTER XIII.

### SUPPLEMENTAL.

Since writing the foregoing part of this work, the ecclesiastical relations of the author have undergone some change. For nearly a year and a half, he has been in happy fellowship with the Presbyterian church. No change of views is he conscious of, in relation to any part of the doctrine, order, or worship of Christ's church, nor of any diminution of attachment to any portion of Christ's people. And in now publishing a treatise which he wrote when he had no prospect of leaving his former

church connection, he does not find it necessary to make any material alteration either in the sentiments or expressions of it. Having had the unusual advantage of contemplating the subject of psalmody from two very different positions—from within and from without the Associate Reformed Church,—and having had the opportunity of fraternal intercourse with the two portions of God's people whose mutual good feeling and fellowship he has aimed, in his essay on psalmody, to promote; he now offers a few additional remarks on the subject, and with the same conciliatory design.

The department of service in which I have been engaged, has led me to visit many churches in Western Pennsylvania, Western Virginia, and the Eastern part of Ohio. I have found a considerable number of Presbyterian churches which use the old psalms alone, in public worship, and many which use them a part of the time. This does not impair brotherly affection between them and their brethren who do not use this versification at all, nor does it prevent their happy and edifying communion with each other. This shows that a similar amity and fellowship might subsist between the Presbyterian church and those churches which use the old psalms; nay it shows that they might be united in the same body without

embarrassment or injury, if they themselves did not decline it. I have been in some neighborhoods, where a state of things assimilating to this actually exists, giving encouragement to hope for yet nearer approximations. The notion that it is wrong to sing any songs of praise, except the psalms, is by no means universal among the ministers, elders, candidates for the ministry, or people of the Associate Reformed church. Facts, which are the best evidence, prove this. An aged and respectable gentleman said, on this point, "It don't hurt my conscience to sing a good hymn." Others declare the same thing, by their practice. Some who abstain from singing praise to God with their fellow christians, in the use of the Assembly's Collection, declare it to be only in accommodation to the wishes of others and not from any belief that it is wrong. Others do not hesitate to say, that they regard the prohibition, which custom has imposed, as oppressive on the conscience; and the espionage on their lips when worshipping in churches of other denominations, as humiliating and invidious.

As to the religious character of Unionists, Presbyterians, Seceders and Covenanters, for they are all found in some localities, there is no perceptible difference among them. They are, generally speaking, the



same kind of sound, serious intelligent, christian people, all attached to the Presbyterian order and to the Calvinistic doctrines, regular at church, and worshipping God in their families. Now why should people who are so much alike in all their religious faith and character be divided? Why should schisms be perpetuated among these followers of Christ? It is giving too much consideration to a new doctrine; it is too costly a sacrifice to denominational policy.

I dare say, even those champions of psalmody, who have taken the doctrine of "exclusive use" under their special patronage and protection, will admit all that has been said in favor of peace and unity: but then, they say they must maintain purity of worship, and teach men "to observe all things whatsoever Christ has commanded." Mat. 28:19. True brethren, true; but in this case you teach what he has not commanded. We look in vain for any such command of Christ, or of any prophet, priest, or king, apostle or evangelist, before yourselves, either in the Scripture or in any creed or confession.

But, the doctrine that has not hitherto been admitted into any Confession, is now an applicant for that honor. I refer to a document lately published, which the Associate

Synod offer to the Associate Reformed, as a *Basis of Union* between the two bodies. It was admitted, I understand, to have been hastily prepared and not discussed in detail, by the A. Synod. I feel less diffidence, therefore, in making a few friendly animadversions upon it, than I would have felt, if it had been fully discussed by a Synod which includes so many judicious, able, and pious servants of Jesus Christ as I know belong to that body. The two following sentences express the doctrine, judicially promulgated in the basis: "We maintain that Jesus Christ has appointed the Book of Psalms to be used *exclusively* in this part of his worship." "The substitution *or use* of uninspired psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, imitations of the Book of Psalms, and paraphrases, is a corruption of the worship of God." The Scripture proofs adduced for this new doctrine, admitted not to be in the Westminster Confession, are these three, Eph. v, 19; Col. iii, 16; 2 Chron. xxix, 30. But my eyes look in vain, for the *exclusive clause*, in either of these proof texts, and the "exclusive doctrine" is the only one which is controverted. I have treated of the first two of these texts before, and I only add here, that if they were admitted to *refer* to the Bible Psalms alone, still they do not support the

Synod's doctrine. The *reference*, in these texts, might be exclusively to the "Book of Psalms," and yet the *injunction* not be so. But I have shown that neither the reference nor the injunction is applicable to the Book of Psalms alone.

The third proof text is a part of the History of Hezekiah's restoration of the neglected ceremonial worship. By what sort of legerdemain is this made to support the exclusive use of David's psalms in the New Testament church? This interpretation of Scripture transmutes a command of Hezekiah into a command of Jesus Christ; it makes the duty of the Levites our duty; it converts a temporary arrangement into a perpetual statute; a legal ceremony into a gospel ordinance; it adds an exclusive clause not found in the text; and it applies the whole, thus augmented and transmuted, to the "Book of Psalms," which was not made into a book for near two hundred years after Hezekiah was dead.

Is the Synod wise in giving the world such a sample of their hermeneutics? Are they consistent when they, in the same breath, deprecate the "teaching for doctrine the commandments of men?" They would have to go far and search diligently before they find so glaring a case of it as they themselves exhibit, in giving as the proof of

a doctrine and a term of communion, the commandment of the man Hezekiah, with whatever additional force it derives from their own endorsement. I must say, and I say it with sorrow, that I have met with no such case of the assumption of authority, by a church court, to impose an article of faith, without even the slender right claimed in the church of Rome—the right of *Tradition*.

Why the command of Hezekiah to the Levites is not half so good proof of the “exclusive” doctrine, as I can bring from the Scriptures for singing *exclusively* the Book of Lamentations. “And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah: and all the singing men and singing women spake of Josiah in their lamentations to this day, and made them an ordinance in Israel: and behold, they are written in the lamentations.”—2 Chron. xxxv, 25. Here is an “ordinance;” observed perpetually, “to this day;” and a plain reference to the written Book—the “Lamentations.” This was one hundred and sixteen years after Hezekiah had given his command to the Levites: so that Jeremiah and the singers of his time did not confine themselves “exclusively” to the Book of Psalms, which was not yet made, nor to the words of David and Asaph. If the words of Hezekiah established a divine and permanent ordinance, Jeremiah, a great

prophet, would certainly have observed it. But he did no such thing.

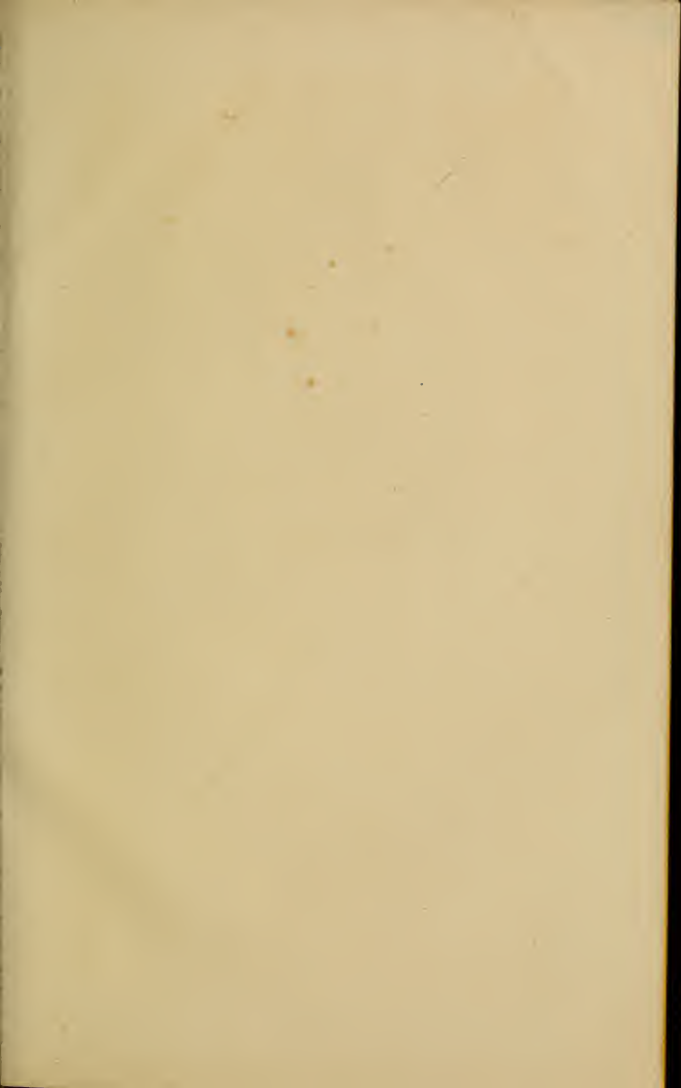
Now, in conclusion of this essay, which I have condensed into the very smallest compass, I respectfully express the hope, that my effort for peace will be furthered by those who read this little work. I have said nothing in it, I trust, that is inconsistent with my avowed and real design, nothing severe, unmannerly or detractive towards my former ecclesiastical associates, whom I still am happy to reckon as my personal friends and christian brethren. In the use of argument and in the statement of facts, alone, have I been uncompromising, and surely they would not wish me to be lenient in this. I have aimed, by fair reasoning, from Scripture and history, to "conquer a peace." Peace comports best with my own disposition, with the spirit and mission of the church to which I belong, and, above all, with the character and commands of the Prince whom we serve. When I think how the cause of Christ has been retarded and cheated of its triumphs by this ill-omened controversy; how neighborhoods have been, for years, left destitute of gospel ordinances; how shame has often covered the cheek of piety with blushes, as infidels and errorists have pointed the finger of scorn at our domestic battle-fields; and when I consider, how ministerial labor

might be saved; how missionary progress might be accelerated; how mutual love and unity might testify to the honor of Jesus Christ before a skeptical world; and how the energy that has been squandered on inter-ecclesiastical strifes might be turned, in its combined and augmented power, on the cause of evangelization, at home and abroad; I ask with a throbbing heart and trembling voice, will the enemies of the Lord never cease to have occasions of contemptuous triumph? Will the real and concurrent friends of the PRINCE OF PEACE never be allowed to gather with unanimous affection around his table and beneath his BANNER OF LOVE?













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